RETROACTION

ISSUE TWO SUMMER 2009

TWILIGHT OF THE SPECTRUM

The first part in our mini-series about the afterlife of the ZX Spectrum

RETRO MAGS

We reminisce about the great magazines from yesteryear

CRONOSOFT

Simon Ullyatt chats about his indie publishing company, Cronosoft

BUILDING CLASSICS

We take a look at one of the most successful game engines ever

We love reading a good magazine, whether it's on the train, the car, or even on the toilet. Printed publications may have their problems, but there's nothing quite like having a real magazine in your hands. However, with increasing production costs, cover prices, and decreasing circulation figures, just how long has the printed magazine industry got? We've been hearing the words of doomsayers regarding the end of the print magazine for years, but it's now getting ominously realistic and people are starting to take note, especially considering the current economical state of countries the world over.

Back in the early 1980s, you could pick up a 100+ page magazine for around £1.00 and in the early 1990s you could find one for about £2.00. Look around today, though, and you'll be lucky to find a magazine under £5.00. Will the price of a printed magazine in 2019 be £10.00?

So what will become of the magazine format? Simple... digital. Companies have been publishing digital magazines in some form or another for several years now—some of them are even free—and with the likes of ISSUU and Lulu.com, it's now possible for anyone to publish books and magazines on-line.

So why am I waffling on about the printed magazine format anyway? Well, this issue happens to have a huge Retromags feature where we look at gaming magazines from the golden days. We point you in the direction of where to get them (in digital form) and speak to one of the guys responsible for kick-starting the whole magazine scanning in the first place.

Elsewhere, we have our cover feature, Building Classics (the Build engine, which was used in games such as *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Blood*), plus an interview with Ken Silverman (developer of the aforementioned Build engine), the fascinating Retr0brite Project, Twilight of the Spectrum, and our interview with Simon Ullyat (owner of indie publisher Cronosoft). There's over twenty pages dedicated to our usual mix of new homebrew, remake, and indie releases, as well as our regular features. Phew.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, as we've worked hard to try and cover a fine balance of platforms, reviews, and articles. Why not drop by our forum? We're always pleased to find out what you like, what you don't like, and any suggestions you may have. See you there…

The *Retroaction* team

P.S.
Don't miss out on our subscription service, which is now up and running, where you will get notified of a new issue being available. To subscribe, click the button below and you will be directed to our online subscription page.

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"Now arriving at Sector C Test Labs and Control Facilities. Please stand back from the automated door and wait for the security officer to verify your identity. Before exiting the train, be sure to check your area for personal belongings. Thank you, and have a very safe, and productive day."

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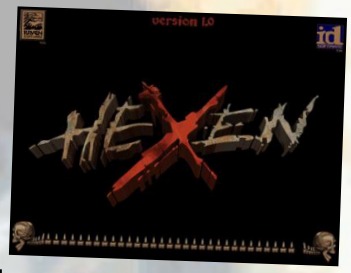
4 RETROSCENE

8 BUILDING CLASSICS

13 KEN SILVERMAN INTERVIEW

16 RETR0BRITE PROJECT

18 RETRO RESPECT: HEXEN



21 GAMESMASTER, SERIES ONE, EPISODE TWO

23 TWILIGHT OF THE SPECTRUM

27 RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCADES: X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM

29 CRONOSOFT'S SIMON ULLYATT:

32 REVIEWS INDEX

56 RETRO MAGAZINES

60 SCANNERMAN: MORT

62 MAME EMULATOR PROFILE

65 RETRO RESPECT: BUCK ROGERS: COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY

68 COMPUTER WARRIOR, PART TWO: DARK FORCES RISING

74 KILLER APP: KILLER INSTINCT GOLD

77 HOW TO CAUSE A COMPLETE CONTROVERSY: NIGHT TRAP

81 RETRO RESPECT: BIO MIRACLE BOKUTTE UPA

83 THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL WORLD OF RETROGAMING: TRAFFIC

RETRO SCENE The latest headlines from the world of retrogaming

Retro Remakes Competition 2008: the winners

All the results for the Retro Remakes competition 2008 are now in. The coders had toiled away for months developing their remakes with 50 entries competing for six categories, it looked like being an impossible task to pick out the winners... but they managed it, overcoming such problems as the website being hacked to death and PCs crashing. So here are the results, including links to the category listings and downloads....

Category 1: Retro Remakes
The Empire Strikes Back
What we said (issue one):
"The graphics are a huge leap from the original's wire frame blocky efforts, but show some rough edges-probably due to the hurriedness of the development. Sound is also impressive with some sampled voices and effects from the film itself. My only concern is that the fun is over rather quickly."

Category 2: Games That Weren't
Sigue Sigue Sputnik
What we think:
"An interesting hybrid of a game—shoot-'em-up with pop culture—that has a full audio/visual experience: music plays throughout while sound effects blast away. The gameplay is pretty simplistic and boredom may set in quickly."

Category 3: Sequels That Weren't
Kung Fu II
What we said (issue one):
"The gameplay is frustrating and not just because it's difficult, but also because it involves as much luck as skill. The graphics are okay and the sound effects are reasonable. It's certainly a challenge, but the repetitive and daunting action may be too much for some."

Category 4: A Game For Helen
The Factory
What we think:
"A great little puzzle game in a similar mould to Lucas Arts' *Night Shift* and Bob Smith's upcoming *Factory Daze*."

Category 5: 8-bit Mash Up
Sportz Daze
What we think:
"If you enjoyed playing classic games like Skool Daze and breaking your joystick with the likes of the waggle-tastic Hypersports, then this mash-up is right up your way."

Category 6: We Like It Retro
Spare A Thought For The Little Guy
What we think:
"A good old fashioned platformer full of nice C64/Speccy hybrid style graphics."

So well done to everyone and commiserations to the runners up. Just so many potential winners that that were, unfortunately, not completed in time for the deadline.

Home of the Underdogs: It Returns

The original Home of the Underdogs website, founded by Sarinee Achavanuntakul, had been online since 1998 and offered visitors a slew of retro goodness. The site's mainstay was its thousands of game archives, which included game summaries, reviews, downloads, manuals, and ratings. Arguably, one of the most famous gaming websites of all time, and just like the mighty, it fell quickly with a thud as it disappeared. Apparently, the webhost's company went bankrupt and the domain was left unattended. But that doesn't matter anymore because it's back...

Home of the Underdogs: It Returns has arrived just in the past few weeks and is looking to be every bit as good as the old site, if not better. However, Achavanuntakul isn't returning this time around, and she has passed on the flame to the new website owners (Lord_Pall and a dedicated team of enthusiasts). Hopefully, it won't be too long before the website is fully operating as a community-driven wiki style website as planned. The game archives and the forum are up and running, so why not pop in, register, look around, and post your thoughts on the site?

MSXdev08 results

The annual MSXdev contest has come to an end. The judges have now tested all twelve brand new games that were entered and the votes have been tallied up:

1. *Deep Dungeon* (*Arturo (ARTRAG) Ragozini John (DemonSeed) Hassink Richard (huey) Cornelisse* - WINNER) - [Game with Better Gameplay!]

2. *I Need Speed* (CEZ GS) [Game with the Best Music!] - [More Polished Game!]

3. *La Corona Encantada* (Karoshi Corporation) [Game with the Best Music!] - [Game with Better Gameplay!]

4. *Danger Tower* (Danger Team) [Game with Better Gameplay!] - [Most Original Game!]

5. *Peek-A-Boo* (dvik&joyrex) [Game with the Best Graphics!]

For the full rundown, including individual ratings and more details of each game entry, visit the MSXdev website.

Magazines from around the world

We've detailed some of the online English language retro publications, so it's only fair to give a shout out to a couple of non-English retro magazines we've found recently.

Old!Gamer

A new commercial retro magazine is coming in May. *Old!Gamer* will be published by in Brazil and, unforunately for anyone who don't know the language, is written in Portuguese. Price is not known at the time, although the editor has said that the publication will be produced on quality paper with good production values. Although in Portuguese (online translator time), there is an interesting Q&A interview with the magazine's editor at gamer.br.

GAME

I had actually found this Italian publication a while back, but was only reminded of it with the recent news of the *Old!Gamer* mag in Brazil. GAME is mainly a multi-format ezine, although there are some good-looking retro articles in there, too. And, yes, it's in Italian, but the production values look amazing, especially considering that it's a free PDF download. The magazine can be found at the gameplayer website, where you can also download back issues.

Retro Joy: The Spectrum +3

In this new column, we will print an interesting retro story. This issue, Mark Hall, one of our contributors, tells us about his Spectrum tales...

Some time ago (maybe a decade or more) I was at a car boot sale where this guy was selling all sorts of consoles, like the Sega Master System, SNES, 3DO and Sega Mega Drive; and I came across what I considered a rare thing of beauty, a true diamond in the ruff if you like, in a Spectrum 128K +3. It was an excellent little find, and the guy was selling it with around 50 games. It had a built-in 3" disk drive, a half decent keyboard and the Konix Speed King Joystick; all finished in black. It was priced ridiculously low, but I didn't have enough cash to buy it. I could still kick myself for not snapping up that bloody machine.

I had the +2 as a kid, but always looked on with envy as my mate proudly loaded his +3 games in under twenty seconds. In comparison, my +2 felt like the crumbs left over from a chocolate Éclair or the crusty ends of a pizza that get left in the box. It's safe to say I always dreamed of getting my hands on the +3, the games would load in seconds, feature speech, music and in some rare cases released solely on disk. Classics such as *Bubble Bobble*, *Rainbow Islands*, *Myth*, *Chase HQ*, *Afterburner*, *Renegade*, T*arget renegade*, *Robocop 1*, *2,* and *3* saw a release on disk, along with many more titles… for me it just felt great loading games or apps in seconds, and on the odd occasion my mate would transfer a bunch of 48k classics onto disk as there was hardly any protection.

I've finally got one (fifteen or so years late). Managed to secure it from eBay a few months back—it was a real sight for saw eyes upon opening the box… It looked slightly bigger than I once remembered and the inherent design, pointed edges and, now outdated, disk tech of the 80s really warmed my cockles. My daughter was like "what's all this then?" So I sat her down, booted up *Bubble Bobble,* and gave her a shot at it. She instantly complained about the graphics and said "why does it look so ugly?" I gnarled at her, and she ran off to find her mum… shouting "ugly, ugly, ugly". I suppose by today's standards, this kinda stuff would appear ugly to kids, but for me, it's a very playable ugliness, and with all the new games currently being released, it's a system I'll be playing for many moons to come.

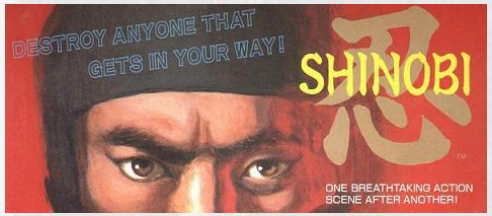
Retroaction Blog

For various reasons we sometimes just can't fit all our articles into the same issue. Because of this, the Retroaction Blog plays host to a number of 'Retro Respect' (*Laser Squad*, *Syndicate*, and *Cyborg Justice*), 'Raiders of the Lost Arcades' (*Shinobi*), and other articles like our 'From Silver Screen to Computer Screen' on the *Terminator* franchise.

From Silver Screen To Computer Screen: Terminator

Retro Respect: Laser Squad

Ocean Software Profile



Retro Respect: Syndicate

Raiders of the Lost Arcades: Shinobi

Retro Respect: Cyborg Justice

Retro games download services

GOG.com (Good Old Games) is a website created by CD Projekt that offers old PC games for a small price. The games are updated to work properly with newer Windows operating systems such as XP and Vista.

The main selling point for GOG has to be that they don't have digital rights management in the downloads. Also the user doesn't have to have any download manager specified by the website to download games. Games come in at around $5.99 or $9.99 and are pretty recent—a few years old—and include extras such as instruction manuals, media, and guides. There are even some games that are free, including one my favourite DOS game of all time: *Beneath A Steel Sky*. So that must warrant a look from any self-respecting retrogamer.

Now if only they could get *Deus Ex* available then I would be in PC gamer's heaven.

Seeing as a vast number of our readers come from Germany, I thought it only fair to discuss this great German website.

Gamesload is an electronic distributor of PC Games and has an ever expanding retro section. In co-operation with SNK Playmore, Gamesload has been able to make classic NEO GEO games exclusively available for the PC. Games such as *Metal Slug*, *Fatal Fury*, and *The King Of Fighters '94* are available to download for EU9.95 each. The site also has an array of modern titles, remakes, and some games are even free.

The website is in German, but you can easily view it with a translator like Google.

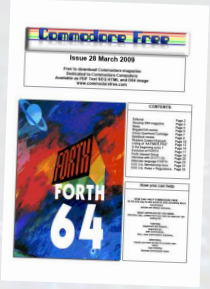
The games are usually available in English/German, as stated in the game info box. With more retro games to come, the website looks like being an essential visit for retrogamers.

Online Retro mags

As much as we'd like to think that *Retroaction* is the only retrogaming magazine you can find online, there are quite a few publications out there.

RGCD is back with issue #05 (March 2009) which contains reviews, previews, and features on a wide rage of retro and indie games. If you're new to *RGCD*, it is an HTML based disc mag, which you can download a "full" version and burn to a CD or view a "lite" version from your hard drive. For more details on the disc mag and the team, visit the RGCD website.

Commodore Free is a monthly publication dedicated to all things Commodore and comes in PDF, text, SEQ, D64, and HTML format. Each issue has news and articles, plus in-depth interviews with people from the retro scene. Visit the Commodore Free website for the latest issue . Back issues are also still available from the website's "Older Issues" page.



Retrogaming Times Monthly (*RTM*) is a great little monthly on-line mag. *RTM*—which has been running for 138 issues (if you count the original incarnation of Retrogaming Times)—consists of reviews, news, as well as some long time regular features. The publication recently acquired its own domain name (http://retrogamingtimes.com/) and is building up an archive and searchable index of all their back issues.

Wolfenstein 3D

Arguably the game responsible for kick-starting the whole First Person Shooter genre, *Wolfenstein 3D* is finally getting converted to a Sega machine—the 32X. Not exactly a popular Mega Drive add-on in the day, and hardly a choice platform for homebrew coders, so it's nice to see Chilly Willy supporting the underused system. A playable beta version of the game is available to download from the Sega dev website.

Last Out

Last Out is a remake of the Amiga classic shoot-'em-up *Z-Out*. The remake is in development by Christophe Simon and version 0.4.1 can be downloaded from here.

Elvira: Mistress of the Dark

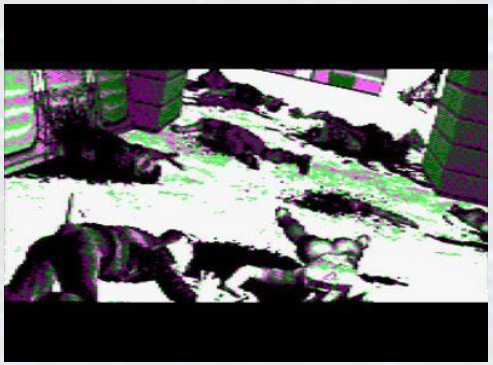
Elvira is coming to the Amstrad CPC courtesy of Devilmarkus. It has been in the works for a few months now and a teaser video can be found at cpc-live.com/elvira/. The conversion is based on the Amiga original, and will feature all the locations, a full point-and-click interface via a mouse and joystick support.

Call Sam Cruise

The classic noir detective game *Call Sam Cruise* is heading to our PCs soon, thanks to Vb64 who is currently coding a remake. The player controls Sam Cruise, who needs to solve a murder. If you want to find out the game's progress and offer any suggestions then head over to the Retro Remakes forums where a discussion on the game is happening…

Orion Prime

Apart from a very successful teaser released in select forums, not a lot is known about *Orion Prime*. What we do know is that *Orion Prime* is an adventure game and has been in the works for a few years now. Coded by Arkos, in association with Les Sucres En Morceaux, the game is due to be presented at the Amtrad Expo 2009 in Coutances (France), on May 29th, 30th, and 31st. The teaser can be downloaded from the Orion Prime website.



Armalyte

An official remake of *Armalyte* is coming to the PC courtesy of S-A-S Designs (Stuart Collier, Trevor Storey, and Chris Bailey). The classic Thalamus shoot-'em-up will appear as a playable demo before getting a full commercial release by Psytronik Software. There's a super interview with Stu and Trev over at Just One More Game.

BUILDING CLASSICS

In terms of number of games released, Build is one of the most successful game engines ever, with over twelve games developed for it. Duncan Rule delves into the engine, its games, and the engine's creator Ken Silverman

When id Software unleashed the seminal *Doom* in 1993, it sent waves of truly colossal proportions though the world of PC gaming. From that point onwards, the question on the lips of every gaming publication and fan worldwide was "Which game will become the *Doom*-killer?" Over the following few years, many tried to build upon what id had done with *Doom* and create the "next big thing". Unsurprisingly, the majority of these were poorly-made, rushed efforts hoping to cash-in on *Doom*'s much-deserved success, and wound up as nothing more than distinctly bland bargain-bin-fillers destined to collect dust for the rest of time.

During this period, programmer Ken Silverman was busy creating what many would come to consider his magnum opus: the Build engine. Build promised to do everything *Doom*'s technology (now officially known as id Tech 1) did, and much, much more. Silverman's engine operated on many of *Doom*'s principles. Maps were still not fully three-dimensional (this wouldn't appear in an FPS until id released *Quake* in 1996), but rather constructed out of two-dimensional shapes known as "sectors". These sectors are given an added component which specifies a floor and ceiling height, and gives the impression of a three-dimensional (but rather limited) world when rendered. As with *Doom*, Build's world is then populated with two-dimensional sprites in order to add detail, objects and enemies to a game.

However, unlike id's baby, Build allowed for additional features such as sloping floors and ceilings, dynamically altered sector information (which made destructible environments possible) and, perhaps most importantly, overlapping sectors (provided only one sector could be viewed at any one time). This meant that designers could create areas that gave the illusion of the coveted "room-above-room" scenario, which was just not possible with a so-called "2.5D" engine. Sectors could also be given tags to perform functions such as teleporting players to other areas of the map. This could be used for traditional "teleporters" in games, but also more subtly to create the illusion of falling into a pit or diving underwater.

Build was one of the most-licensed engines in the history of gaming, and almost anyone who owned a PC in the mid-to-late '90s has encountered a game that used it at one point or another. The last game to officially use the engine appeared in 1999, but Silverman's work lives on today, in no small part thanks to a release of the source code back in June 2000. But enough about the engine itself; let's take a look at the games…

Duke Nukem 3D

Developer: 3D Realms
Publisher: Apogee Software
Year: 1996

Duke Nukem 3D is undoubtedly the most well known and well-loved of all the Build engine games, having been ported to pretty much every system available at the time, including a little known Brazilian Mega Drive port that looks more like *Wolfenstein 3D* than *Duke*. Created in 1996 by 3D Realms, Duke was the primary vehicle for Build, and the focus for much of the engine's development. *Duke Nukem 3D* picks up directly from where *Duke Nukem II* left off, and transplants Apogee's beloved platform-hopping hero into a brave new world of three-dimensional alien-blasting mayhem.

As with pretty much every FPS of its era, *Duke 3D* is light on the story and heavy on the action. Aliens are taking over planet earth and generally harassing good and honest folk (including a disturbingly large number of nude women), and it's up to the Duke to stick his foot up their collective ass and give 'em a taste of hot lead. That's about as complex as the plot gets here, and the rest of the game simply involves traversing cities, shops, strip clubs, bases, canyons and space stations, looking for increasingly huge guns to destroy increasingly nasty aliens with.

While it may seem like nothing more than *Doom* with sunglasses and a blonde buzz-cut, *Duke* delivers a hell of a lot more than its hellspawn-slaughtering predecessor. One of the most attractive aspects of the game, and unquestionably one which separated it from the dreck of the time, is its level design. Gone are the generic, nondescript mazes which defined the genre, and instead we're treated to all manner of convincing real-world locales to blast though. Comedy also plays an important role alongside the gibs and guns, and Duke's frequent one-liners have been firmly cemented into the annals of PC gaming. What's not to love about a game that lets you relieve your bladder into a variety of pixellated toilets in the midst of the action, or a protagonist who defecates down the neck of a recently deceased boss monster while reading the paper? Who could forget the infamous "Shake it, baby!", or a weapon that lets you shrink enemies down to pintsize proportions before stamping on them like a bug?

Duke Nukem 3D isn't ever going to win an award for sophistication. It's rude, crude, obnoxious, offensive and hilariously good fun. Plus it can now be had for next to nothing from GOG.com and in a new incarnation on Xbox Live Arcade. A true classic that everyone and… well, maybe not their mum… should play.

Blood

Developer: Monolith Productions
Publisher: GT Interactive
Year: 1997

Blood was never going to have an easy time of it. After all, it was a sprite-based game in a post-*Quake* world where everyone was too busy marvelling over new-fangled fully 3D engines to worry about the perfect atmosphere and wonderful design of what was seen as yet another Build game. But despite being rather less well known than *Duke* (for precisely these reasons), *Blood* has nevertheless managed to maintain a loyal cult following over the years, thanks in no small part to its utter uniqueness.

Superficially, *Blood* appears to be very similar to *Duke* in many respects, mainly thanks to the engine. However, *Blood* succeeded in taking the FPS genre to places it had never been before with its unusual setting and thematic elements. Taking place some time during the 1920s, *Blood* puts you in the boots of Caleb, an undead gunslinger hell-bent on exacting revenge on the dark god who slaughtered him in his first life. The game begins with the heavy stone lid sliding off your tomb as Caleb utters the words "I live…

again!", and from there on out it's just you against an army of zombies, cultists, gargoyles, spiders, and all manner of hideous occult beasties as you battle your way through four episodes of dark, gothic levels to reach your goal. It's certainly different from the usual "You are Sgt. Muscles McBadass; save the world!" approach of most FPS games.

Blood is a real treat for any fans of horror fiction, and the game is absolutely littered with references (some subtle and some not-so-subtle) to a myriad of horror movies and books. You'll hear quotes from *The Evil Dead*, find Zombies encased in metal barrels a la *Return of the Living Dead*, and even a rather frosty Jack Nicholson in the middle of a hedge maze. Unfortunately, *Quake*-mania meant that *Blood* never really received the attention it deserved (and no doubt would have received had it been released a year or two earlier), and the game today is reserved to cult status. The acquisition of Monolith by Infogrames (and subsequently Atari) seems to have destroyed the hope of any possible source code release in the future. Still, *Blood* is a great piece of gore-soaked fun, and a game well worth picking up if you can find it.

Shadow Warrior

Developer: 3D Realms
Publisher: GT Interactive
Year: 1997

3D Realms' second and final game to be made with the Build engine was *Shadow Warrior*; *Duke Nukem*'s slightly more refined, feature-laden Japanese cousin. You play as Lo Wang (pun intended); a master assassin and stereotypically Asian Duke clone who is tasked with, you guessed it, saving the world (or at least Japan) from an evil corporation known as Zilla Enterprises.

If you loved *Duke*, you'll find plenty to like with *Shadow Warrior*, as it provides an extremely similar gaming experience. Wise-cracking protagonist? Check. A host of pop-culture references? Check. Lashings of tongue-in-cheek humour? Check. Plenty of big weapons to demolish the bad guys with? Oh yes! *Shadow Warrior* focuses on a Japanese/Samurai/Ninja/martial arts-type setting, and the locations, weapons and enemies are designed accordingly. You can hack baddies apart with a razor-sharp katana, pepper them with shurikens (unless you own the British version which replaces these with darts, thanks to our friends over at the BBFC), or batter them with your fists of fury in a pinch. There's also plenty of standard weaponry on offer, such as twin Uzis and a riot shotgun, along with the obligatory ridiculous instruments of death such as a dismembered head that shoots fire and a miniature nuclear missile.

Shadow Warrior also brought a few engine enhancements to the table such as voxel items, transparent water, and primitive drivable vehicles. It's probably not a game deserving of "classic" status, but it's the next logical step for anyone who's finished *Duke* and wanting more of the same—a solid old-style shooter that doesn't take itself too seriously. *Shadow Warrior*'s source code was also released in 2005, and there are now ports available for a variety of modern operating systems.

Redneck Rampage

Developer: Xatrix Entertainment
Publisher: Interplay
Year: 1997

Completing the "big four" Build game line-up is *Redneck Rampage*, a truly memorable FPS that delivers "all the killin', twice the humour [and] half the intelligence" of its contemporaries.

Like many of the Build engine games, *Redneck Rampage* manages to inject a surprising degree of freshness into a genre that was, at the time, almost entirely comprised of uninspired "clones". The action takes place in the (unfortunately fictional) backwoods town of Hickston, Arkansas, and centres on two brothers; Leonard (the player) and Bubba, as they attempt to retrieve their prized pig Bessie from aliens who've invaded Earth and dun swiped 'er. It's certainly one of the stupider plots out there, and the rest of the game matches it beautifully. Health and armour are replaced by junk food and alcohol respectively, and players are forced to strike a delicate balance with their consumption of each. Too much food and you risk alerting enemies to your presence with an unfortunately-timed fart as you creep up on them; too much alcohol and your view and controls become garbled as you try to deal with the effects of drunkenness. It's certainly a refreshing take on the tried-and-tested systems of old, and adds the need for some strategic item usage to the game. *Redneck Rampage* also introduces a novel way to end the level: locate your halfwit of a brother (who somehow manages to make it to the end of the stage miles ahead of you without killing a single enemy) and whack him in the face with your crowbar.

The enemies are an amusing bag of alien clones of the townsfolk (the Skinny Old Coot and his cries of "Git awf mah laynd!" being one of the game's most memorable moments), huge alien guards, dominatrix-styled "vixens" complete with machine-gun breasts, "turd minions" who pelt you with faeces, and an assortment of non-alien Deep South nasties such as vicious guard dogs and mosquitoes the size of a dinner plate. The weapon selection ranges from the tried-and-true pistol/shotgun/machine gun set through to more bizarre offering such as the vixens' machine-gun bra and a crossbow that fires sticks of dynamite (the ultimate redneck rocket launcher).

Redneck Rampage took the crude humour of *Duke 3D* and upped the ante considerably to never-before-seen levels of tastelessness. The end result is an insanely fun and memorable FPS, the likes of which we aren't likely to see again any time soon. The game did however receive an expansion and sequel (essentially a standalone expansion), along with a deer hunting game, *Redneck Deer Huntin'*, also based upon Build's technology.

Witchaven

Developer: Capstone Software
Publisher: IntraCorp Entertainment
Year: 1995

Witchaven was one of the earlier (pre-*Duke 3D*) Build games, and as a result was built upon a slightly less-refined version of the engine than its shotgun-toting descendent. With *Witchaven*, Capstone attempted to combine the fast paced action of the nascent FPS genre with elements associated with CRPGs (such as breakable weapons and experience points), all within a traditional fantasy setting. The resulting game is a bit of a mixed bag. The levels are pretty vast in comparison to *Duke*, but the unpolished feel of the game's presentation (such as enemies that appear to have been created initially as models while others were rendered entirely with software) combined with slippery, awkward controls make the whole experience a pretty forgettable one. Capstone released a sequel, *Witchaven II: Blood Vengeance*, a year later that adds a few extras such as human enemies, the ability to wield dual weapons, and a level editor. Unfortunately, the game underneath remains unchanged and the sequel failed to win over many (if any) new fans.

Extreme Paintbrawl

Developer: Creative Carnage
Publisher: Head Games
Year: 1998

The only thing extreme about *Extreme Paintbrawl* is its crappiness. As the title suggests, the game is an attempt at a paintball sim, which seems to be a somewhat odd choice of pastime to bother recreating in the electronic medium. It manages to fluctuate between two extremes of difficulty which combine to create one extra-rancid whole. The AI in *Extreme Paintbrawl* is, on the whole, god awful, and you'll often see both teammates and enemies stuck helplessly on bits of terrain as they attempt to throw strategy completely out of the window and fire blindly at you in a straight charge across the map. If you're lucky enough to encounter an enemy who isn't stuck on the scenery, you'll usually feel the wrath of their perfect aim as they hit you with the first shot they fire, ending the round. In addition, despite being a DOS game, *Extreme Paintbrawl* will only run in Windows thanks to an extremely out of place frontend (the only Build game with such a requirement). Oh, and it came in out 1998. This is budget software of the worst kind. Avoid, avoid, avoid.

Legend of the Seven Paladins

Developer: Accend, Inc.
Publisher: Accend, Inc.
Year: 1994

Probably the least known Build game on account of its extreme obscurity, *Legend of the Seven Paladins* was developed by a Chinese company who had been in talks with 3D Realms to license Silverman's technology. The deal fell through, but the team apparently pressed ahead with the game regardless. It was originally thought that *Legend of the Seven Paladins* only existed in demo form, but at least one retail copy has since been spotted on a Taiwanese auction site.

William Shatner's TekWar

Developer: Capstone Software
Publisher: IntraCorp Entertainment
Year: 1995

…or should that be *William Shatner's SteamingPile*? A strong contender for the worst Build game this side of *Extreme Paintbrawl*, *TekWar* is based upon Shatner's ghost-written book series of the same name. You play an ex-police agent turned hitman whose mission is to eliminate "tek" dealers. While the game is notable for utilizing a hub-based level system a la *Hexen*, and featuring non-hostile NPCs, the end product is an amazingly poor exercise in game design. Don't bother with this stinker, even if you're a Shatner fan.

Exhumed

Developer: Lobotomy Software
Publisher: BMG Interactive
Year: 1997

This curious entry into the FPS genre saw the light of day on the PC, PSX and Saturn at the time of release. However, while the Playstation and Saturn incarnations use a true 3D engine built specifically for the game, the PC version was inexplicably built upon Ken Silverman's engine instead. Known as *PowerSlave* in the US (an obvious nod to Iron Maiden's seminal 1984 album of the same name), the game follows the Build tradition of unorthodox setting and places the player in ancient Egyptian city of Karnak, complete with all the stereotypical monsters you'd expect. It's not a bad game by any means, but definitely not up there with the best of the Build alumni.

WWII GI

Developer: Team TNT
Publisher: GT Interactive
Year: 1999

In 1999 (would you believe), Team TNT followed up *NAM* with the similarly themed *WWII GI*, which this time had the player take the role of a soldier during the D-Day invasion of France. On the whole it's really not that different to its predecessor, save for the graphical style, and being released as late as '99 makes this one a good contender for one of the last ever commercially released DOS games.

NAM/Napalm

Developer: Team TNT
Publisher: GT Interactive
Year: 1998

NAM originally began life as a total conversion (TC) for *Duke Nukem 3D* known as "*Platoon TC*". Created by Team TNT of *Final Doom* fame, *NAM* places you in the combat boots of a GI during the Vietnam War. The game was released in 1998, and as a result seems even more dated than some of its brethren, as games like *Quake II*, *Half-Life* and *Unreal* were coming out around the same time. It does however appear to be one of the earliest war-based FPS games, and adds a few features such as friendly team-mates, airstrikes and booby traps that force the player to adopt a more strategic style of play. An interesting game doomed to obscurity from the start.

The lost Build games

There were also two in-development Build games that never saw the light of day. The first of these was known as *Fate*, and was developed by DogBone Software, a subsidiary of IntraCorp. Despite IntraCorp's less-than-stellar reputation, *Fate* did actually look to be a promising title and appeared much more polished than the majority of the company's earlier output. However, *Fate* (shown on the right) only made it to demo stages before IntraCorp went bankrupt and the game disappeared into the void for eternity.

The second "lost" Build game was interestingly enough also tied to IntraCorp, albeit this time coming from the studio behind *Witchaven*, Capstone Software. *Corridor 8: Galactic Wars* was a planned sequel to Capstone's earlier *Wolfenstein 3D* clone *Corridor 7: Alien Invasion*. The game disappeared as IntraCorp went under, and not even a demo managed to surface to the public. The game's source code, along with a prototype, was however released onto the net in 2005 by one of the original dev team.

KEN SILVERMAN INTERVIEW

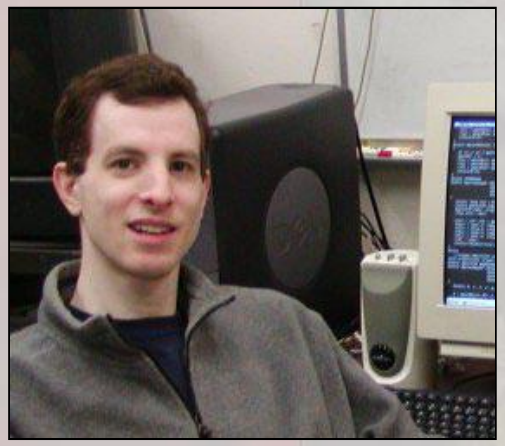
Duncan Rule recently had the chance to catch up with Build's creator, Ken Silverman, to chat about his time in the games industry, and his most famous creation

"Build" games that Ken was heavily involved with:

Duke Nukem 3D (3DRealms, GT Interactive)
Shadow Warrior (3DRealms, GT Interactive)
Blood (Monolith, GT Interactive)

"Build" games that Ken has done some kind of limited support for:

Exhumed - *a.k.a. Powerslave* (Lobotomy, Playmates Interactive Ent.)
Witchaven (Capstone, Intracorp)
Witchaven II: Blood Vengeance (Capstone, Intracorp)
TekWar (Capstone, Intracorp)
Fate (Capstone, Intracorp)
Redneck Rampage (Xatrix, Interplay)
Redneck Rampage Rides Again (Xatrix, Interplay)
Redneck Deer Huntin' (Xatrix, Interplay)

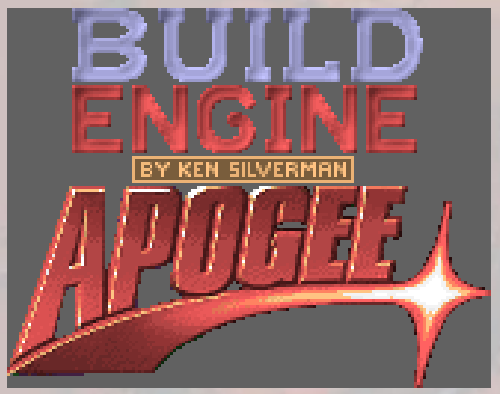


Duncan Rule: Tell us about your first exposure to computers. What was the first system you used and/or owned? Were you interested in gaming from an early age?
Ken Silverman: Throughout the 80s, my dad would take my older brother and I to his lab on occasion. To kill time, we would find an unoccupied Unix terminal and play games on it. My first computer was a TI-99/4a, which we got in December 1983.

DR: When did you develop an interest in programming and what was the first system you programmed for?
KS: My interest in programming began when I got the TI-99/4a. In the early days, I would work with my brother, such as designing mazes for a *Pacman* game. Later, my obsession with programming would overtake my brother's. I used TI BASIC, which was very slow; most of the games I wrote for it involved a monster (a red dot) chasing you (a green dot) that you would control with the joystick. Later, my dad borrowed a Kaypro II from work—it was like DOS with no graphics modes. I wrote some grid-based text adventures on that one. He later borrowed an HP Series 200, which had EGA-like graphics. I wrote some board games, some card games, and some other simple 2D games on it.

DR: When did you get your first PC, and which programming languages were you using initially?
KS: I got my first PC in November 1988. I probably installed *QuickBasic* on the first day. My parents tried to get me into C programming early on, but I was more comfortable with *QuickBasic*. It wasn't until 1990 that I started to realize the benefits of C.

DR: How and when did you enter the games industry in a professional capacity?
KS: That would be January 1, 1993, the day I released the shareware version of Ken's Labyrinth. I got a lot of calls after that. One of them was Epic MegaGames, who later sold the game under its own label. Later that year, I signed a contract with Apogee Software to develop the Build engine.



The logo used for the Build Engine games

DR: Tell us about Build's genesis and what you wanted to accomplish with it. Was it intended to better what had been done by John Carmack with the *Doom* engine?
KS: I started playing around with *Doom* tech soon after seeing id Software's original press release about it. I wrote an early demo with angled walls—PICROT4.BAS dated March 29, 1993. I have a copy of it on my website. At first, I was just trying to copy the features in the press release. When *Doom* (classic) was released, the goal changed to improving on the features of *Doom* in order to stay competitive.

DR: Did 3D Realms commission you to create the engine, or was it already a

"When *Doom* (classic) was released, the goal changed to improving on the features of *Doom* in order to stay competitive"

work-in-progress when they became involved?
KS: I had already named Build and written a demo when they hired me. They would not have offered me a deal otherwise. You can find this demo on my website—search for "grid-based BUILD engine". In January 1994, I did a complete rewrite of the engine, using the sector idea.

DR: To what extent were 3D Realms involved in the development of the engine itself? Did they specify the things they'd like to see included?
KS: Everybody had ideas and suggestions, but I did all the programming on the engine and tools. I didn't actually share the engine source code until late in the project. Many ideas were obvious, such as reminding me to copy features of other games. Many of them were impractical. Ultimately, it was up to me to select what ideas were most practical and useful to work on each day.

DR: Was Build originally intended to be used for *Duke Nukem 3D*?
KS: Build was not originally intended for any specific team. It was up to Apogee Software to find interested parties. One of the earliest users of Build was Nick Newhard, the head programmer of *Blood*. Todd [Replogle] and Allen [Blum] of *Duke Nukem 3D* didn't start with the engine until January 1994.

DR: How did Capstone come to use the engine for *Witchaven* before *Duke* was released? Was the engine unfinished at this time?
KS: I'm not sure how the Capstone deal came about. I only found out about it after the deal was done. Apparently, their contract had no restriction on release date. Notably missing from *Witchaven* were the sloped ceilings and floors. I was still adding features to Build in 1997. There is no specific finish date.

DR: What was the biggest technical

"I never wrote a design document for Build. I don't work that way. I plan things in my head, and find something useful to work on each day"

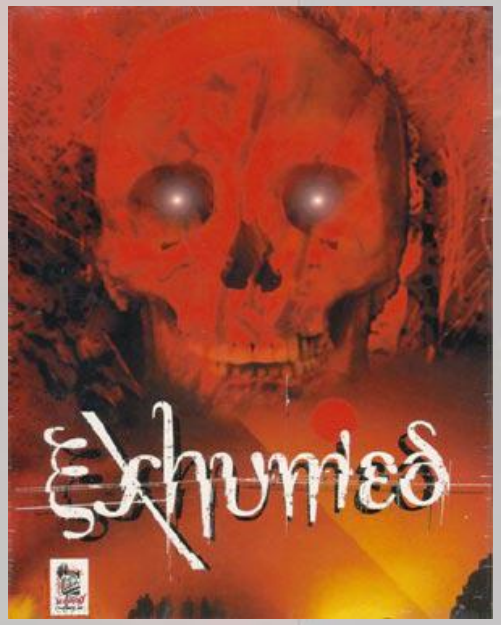
challenge you came across when programming Build? Was there anything you had to leave out due to its complexity or feasibility?
KS: The biggest challenge would have to be the network code. It would have been nice if I had it all figured out in my original sample game. But I knew little about networking, and had to figure things out in the middle of the project. Once I got it working in my own test game, I had to figure out how to incorporate the changes into each game (*Duke 3D*, *Blood*, and *Shadow Warrior*). I had to learn three different code bases.

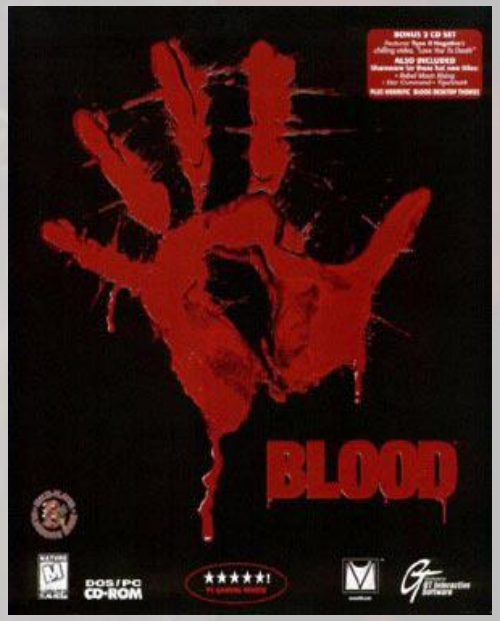
DR: Did 3D Realms give you a deadline for Build? Is there anything you didn't include that you'd have liked to? Did it live up to your expectations?
KS: That's one thing that's nice about working for 3D Realms—there are no deadlines, only milestones.

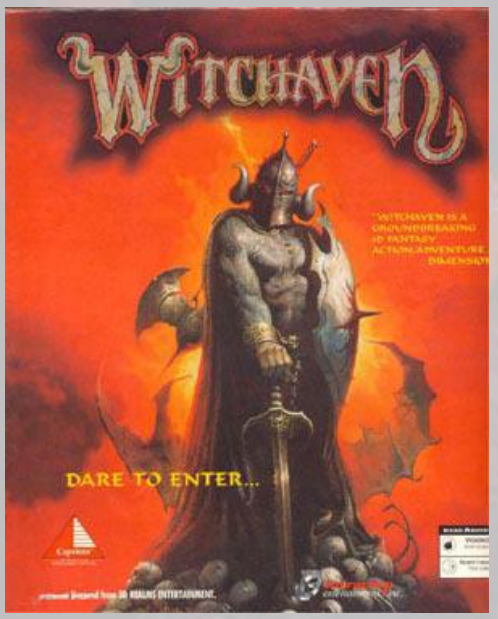
Here are some of the bigger things I wanted to do but never had time for:
* True perspective look up/down
* Native support for sector-over-sector
* Fancy lighting system
* Drop-in networking

I never wrote a design document for Build. I don't work that way. I plan things in my head, and find something useful to work on each day. It's a process of evolution. I can't say that I had expectations.

DR: Did you personally make any





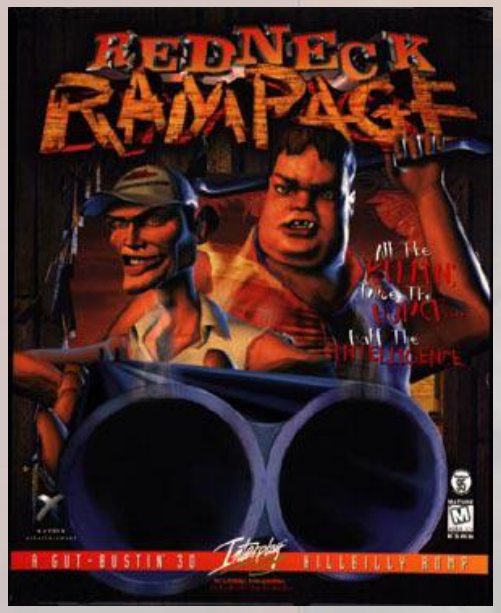


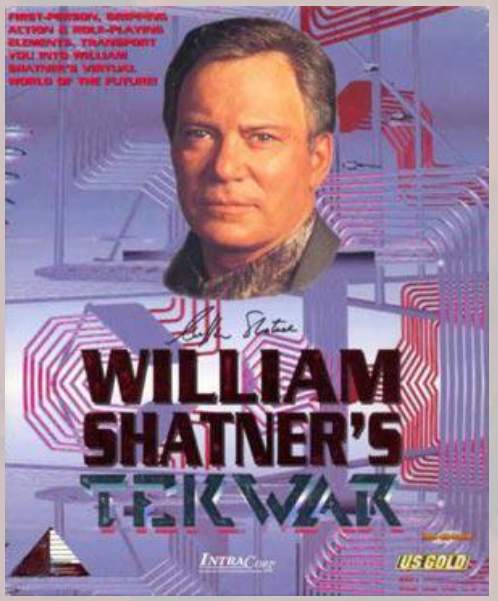
changes for *Shadow Warrior*, *Blood*, *Redneck Rampage* or any other Build games?
KS: I did several enhancements after *Duke 3D*. The most notable features are support for room over room and voxel sprites. *Shadow Warrior* also had transparent floors. I did very little to support *Redneck Rampage*, as they were not an internal team at any time.

DR: Which of the Build engine games are your favourite(s)? Are there any that you've never played?
KS: I always thought *Blood* had the best graphics; *Shadow Warrior* had the most features, and *Duke 3D* got points mainly for being the first of the big games. I have not played many Build games besides these three, and I don't think I've played through any of them without cheating.

DR: In 2000 you took the step of releasing Build's source code to the public. What compelled you to do this? Do you feel this is something that more programmers and developers should be doing with their older material?
KS: I released the code at that time for several reasons:
1. id Software set a precedent by releasing the *Doom* code.
2. Fans were pressuring me to release it.
3. I wanted to finish college before releasing it—to avoid a barrage of email during classes.
4. I felt that there was little value left in the Build code.

If people want to release code, that's great. But it takes time to prepare code for release. First you have to select a license that you're happy with. Then if you care, you





should document some things, like how to compile the code. The hardest part is removing or replacing anything that may be inappropriate, such as copyright textures or sounds that you did not make.

DR: Have you played any of the enhanced ports of *Duke* and *Shadow Warrior*? Have you tried the Xbox LIVE Arcade version of *Duke*?
KS: I wrote some of the systems in JonoF's ports, so obviously I have played those. I have yet to see the XBLA version in action.

DR: What's new in the world of Ken Silverman in the post-Build era? What have you developed since Build? What are you working on at the moment?
KS: I put many of my recent projects on my website (http://advsys.net/ken). I guess the most

> "I always thought *Blood* had the best graphics; *Shadow Warrior* had the most features, and *Duke 3D* got points mainly for being the first of the big games"

popular ones have been: *Voxlap*, *PNGOUT*, and *Evaldraw*. I still do plenty of programming, but I don't like to announce things before they are finished.

DR: What's your view on the games industry of today?
KS: The industry has grown a lot since my time. I've gotten some offers, but I'm really not interested in returning to the industry. I'd rather work on my own ideas.

DR: Are you a retro gamer? Do you still find time to play the classics now and then?
KS: When I have time to waste, it is usually one of my own games that I play. I've written a few arcade classics for *Evaldraw*, such as *Breakout* and *Pacman* clones. I am always working on new things, but I do not wish to announce anything at this time.

DR: Lastly, do you think *Duke Nukem Forever* will ever see the light of day?
KS: I have no inside information other than knowing the tendencies of a few people who used to work there when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

If you're interested in seeing more of Ken's work, you can check out his personal website here: http://www.advsys.net/ken/

Many thanks to Ken Silverman and Jonathon Fowler for their help and contributions.

THE RETR0BRITE PROJECT

Are your old computers and consoles looking "not-so-mellow yellow"? Then read on as David Stevenson explains all about Retr0brite

Anyone who has dug their old computer or console out of the cupboard or loft for some retrogaming will probably have noticed that it maybe hasn't worn too well with the test of time. The plastics these machines were made of is called ABS and to make it flame retardant (just in case it catches fire after a marathon session) the plastics manufacturers added chemicals which make the plastic turn yellow or, even worse, brown.

It was originally thought that the yellowing was permanent and that only solution to this was to paint the plastic in its original colour and cover the problem up. However, a chance discovery was made in March 2008, by the CBM Museum at Wuppertal in Germany, that immersing parts in a solution of hydrogen peroxide could partially reverse the process. This was initially taken up by the Amiga community in Germany (http://www.a1k.org) and the idea eventually found its way to the English Amiga Board, where a madcap collection of chemists, plastics engineers and retro hackers managed to perfect this concept with help from other forums and put it on steroids.

I came across the use of peroxide in July 2008 when Kristian95 told us about what they were doing with it over at a1k.org. I was intrigued by this, as I am a former industrial chemist. I am also a plant safety manager by trade and, purely by coincidence, around that time I read about a dust explosion that had occurred with a chemical called TAED, which is the booster in the 'active oxygen' laundry products.

Merlin's proof of concept experiment

Tonyyeb's Amiga keys experiment

Lorne's Osborne 1 experiment

Tezza's Apple II experiment

This got me thinking, and after some really full-on serious chemistry discussions with other EAB members, like rkauer in Brazil, who is a plastics Engineer and my good friend Zetr0, who endured endless phone calls from me and some epic threads on EAB about the possible causes of the yellowing, we had arrived at the theory that it was the bromine in the flame retardant that was the cause. We also knew that Ultra Violet light was another factor. Having identified the culprit, the next stage was to try to develop and perfect a means of treating the plastic and reversing the yellowing without damaging the plastic. Being a former industrial chemist helped me tremendously, in understanding what was going on at molecular level and develop a treatment process to reverse the effect.

The problem was finally cracked in late July 2008 with a mixture of hydrogen peroxide, a small amount of an "Oxy" laundry booster as a catalyst and a UV lamp. Proof of this concept was demonstrated on EAB by Tonyyeb, Chiark, and myself.

Then we took the idea to other forums, where the idea received a sceptical response at first. Lorne from Arizona and Tezza from New Zealand from the Vintage

The problem was finally cracked in late July 2008 with a mixture of hydrogen peroxide, a small amount of an "Oxy" laundry booster as a catalyst and a UV lamp

The Commodore 64 experiment (notice the treated side on the left)

Computer Forums really took on the idea and helped us perfect the process between VCF and EAB. We have now proved that plastics yellowing can be completely reversed in hours using our mixture."

All of the initial tests were done with a liquid and we realised that for large parts this was getting expensive, so the next stage was to make a paintable "gel" that could be brushed onto larger surfaces. This was tried in Arizona in the sun and the UK under a UV lamp and was found to be just as effective as the liquid. We have now released this to the public domain for anyone to use as we can't patent it and we coined the nickname "Retr0brite" for it, as it summed up what we were actually doing with it.

The most extreme test we have done to date was a Commodore 64, which was treated in several stages by myself over an eight-hour period, to show what could be achieved; this was a particularly impressive result.

We now have active threads about this at several forums across the World and we have now set up a Retr0brite support thread for those who are interested at our retro computer trading site, AmiBay.

I would strongly warn people that hydrogen peroxide is very nasty stuff and usually you can't buy stronger than 12% over the counter as it is used to bleach hair. If you want to try this, I would strongly suggest that you wear goggles and gloves to protect yourself.

The magical gel mixture that was found to work is:

1 pint (500ml) hydrogen peroxide, 12% strength;
1 to 2 tablespoonfuls of Xanthan Gum or Arrow Root (available from health food shops or online)
1 teaspoonful of Glycerine (available from pharmacies)

This should be mixed together using a high speed blender or a liquidiser until a smooth, non-drip gel has formed. This can be put into a jar or tub and stored, as long as you DON'T add the "Oxy".

Just before you paint the gel onto the parts, add ¼ teaspoonful of any "Oxy" type laundry booster and then put the parts under a UV lamp or out in the sun.

A day or so later, your parts should be as good as new, wash the gel off and that's it! It may take another treatment for the worst yellowing to be reversed but in all cases it will eventually be successful. To permanently prevent the yellowing from returning, just coat the parts with a clear acrylic varnish.

There was an incredible number of people at first that said this was impossible—that was until they saw the pictures, then tried it and proved it for themselves

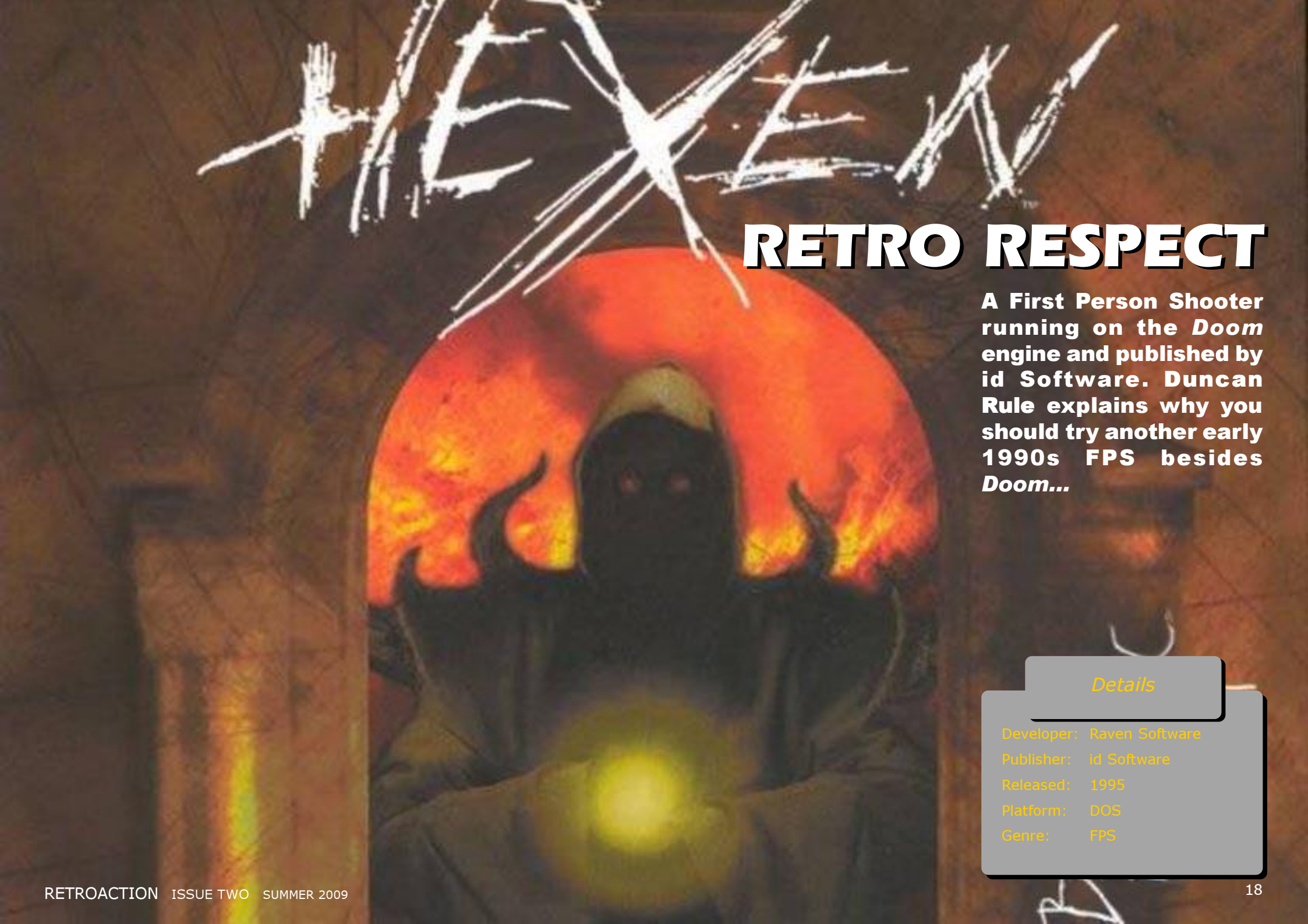
An Apple Mac (before and after) treatment by Krye of Vintage Computer Forums

A Commodore VIC-20 and an Atari 130XE before and after, treated by Tezza of Vintage Computer Forums

There was an incredible number of people at first that said this was impossible—that was until they saw the pictures, then tried it and proved it for themselves. The usual reaction was "No way!" then "WOW!".

This has been a truly global effort by retro enthusiasts and has proved to work on Commodore, Atari, Osborne, Apple, and other machines and the work still continues on various forums worldwide. As long as you protect yourself against the hydrogen peroxide, this is pretty goof proof and I hope that others get to see the amazing effect we spent so much time working to achieve.

The Retr0brite Project can be found here.



RETRO RESPECT

A First Person Shooter running on the *Doom* engine and published by id Software. Duncan Rule explains why you should try another early 1990s FPS besides *Doom*...

Details

Developer:	Raven Software
Publisher:	id Software
Released:	1995
Platform:	DOS
Genre:	FPS

In 1993 id Software unleashes *Doom* on an unsuspecting public, and the face of gaming is changed forever. Developer Raven Software acquires the license to id's technology, and releases *Heretic* in 1994, transplanting *Doom*'s fast and furious death-dealing gameplay into a fantasy world of daemons, castles and sorcery. In 1995, Raven releases their follow up to *Heretic*. *Hexen* is born.

Heretic chronicled the adventures of the Sidhe elf Corvus, and his quest to defeat D'Sparil, the first of the three serpent riders. *Hexen* picks up the twisted saga in Chronos, an alternate dimension where the seeds of destruction are being sown by the second serpent rider, Korax. Three heroes set out to destroy Korax and end his reign of terror. Guess what… you're one of them. It's all pretty standard "kill the bad guy; save the world" fantasy shtick, but this is, after all, a mid-90s FPS, and you should be less concerned with the plot, and more concerned with the vast armies of Ettins, Afrits, Chaos Serpents and other assorted "ye olde nasties" that are waiting to rip your face off out in the wilderness.

If you run out of ammo, your gauntlet comes in handy for swiping at ugly mushes like this

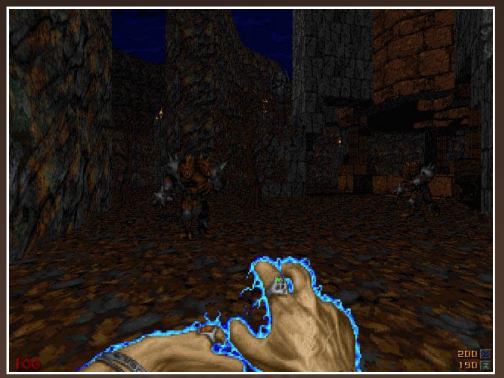
Essentially, *Hexen* was to *Heretic* what *Quake II* was to its legendary predecessor: an expansion of the original game's ideas and innovations into a more complete, rounded game, set in a believable world with a greater degree of freedom and depth. Indeed, compared to *Hexen*, *Quake* is practically a step back in the evolution of the FPS genre. Sure, it cranked the graphics up to eleven with its fully three-dimensional world; but the gameplay itself devolved back to the early days of linear level-by-level progression in seemingly random locales. *Hexen* was the first game to really popularise the "hub" level system that has been so commonplace ever since. The game's levels are all built around central areas, each of which contains a main puzzle that must be solved by visiting the various branch levels and collecting items or activating switches. Granted, *Hexen*'s puzzles aren't exactly of the mind-boggling variety, but they nevertheless provided a very welcome breath of fresh air at a time when most FPS games just involved shotgunning your way to the exit as quickly as possible.

While *Hexen* does indeed run on *Doom*'s technology (a fact that was oft criticised at the time, when shiny new FPS engines were on the horizon), Raven weren't just content with using John Carmack's baby as-is. Instead, they tweaked and modified the engine to suit the needs of their own vision, resulting in a number of graphical enhancements and additional features. First and most foremost are those listed on the box. For starters, this was the first *Doom* engine game that gave

There are many weapons, including this nice littler number. Wood kindlings, anyone?

players the ability to jump, and you'll need it if you want to get anywhere in the realm of Chronos. *Hexen* also allows you to select between three unique player classes, which actually have a noticeable effect on gameplay other than simply giving you a different character skin. Become a fighter, and you'll easily smash your way through the earlier stages of the game with your brute strength and impressive speed. Choose the mage class, and you'll be awarded magic-based weapons that make attacking from afar a very viable option, albeit at the cost of having a rather fragile body. Alternatively, select the cleric, and take a best-of-both-worlds approach with melee combat skill and magical ability placed hand-in-hand. Of course, the inventory system from *Heretic* has also been carried over to *Hexen*, and the game is littered with all manner of valuable artefacts that can be used to your advantage; from health flasks to bombs, to an item which turns enemies into squealing pigs that you can mercilessly slaughter with a crack of your mace. *Hexen* also supports an impressive (for the time) multiplayer experience that allows up to 8 players to compete against each other over a network. The game also allows for co-operative play, which is ridiculously fun and well worth giving up an afternoon for. Get two of your mates to fill in the other character classes, and your trusty trio can raise hell through all of the single player campaign's levels. Korax's minions won't know what hit them.

Raven also included a number of more subtle enhancements to the *Doom* engine in *Hexen*, such as random ambient noises, monster spawning, complex scripted events (including shifting levels and earthquakes) and pseudo-moving walls, all of which serve to make the game a rather more believable and immersive experience than that of its predecessor. The levels don't feel like "levels" in *Hexen*, but rather a complete, fully functioning world. While these engine enhancements certainly add a lot to the gameplay experience, the real star of the show here is the



And if guns and swords fail, then I'll use my magic on ye

Hexen was to *Heretic* what *Quake II* was to its legendary predecessor: an expansion of the original game's ideas and innovations into a more complete, rounded game…

One swift swipe of my big sword and you're mince meat, ye hear me?

level design itself. *Hexen*'s levels are, in my opinion, some of the greatest ever created, and there's a real attention to detail with each and every one of them that just makes the game ooze atmosphere by the bucketload. The outdoor areas are particularly well done, and you'll feel totally immersed in the world of Chronos as you traverse misty swamps, shadowy graveyards, barren wastelands and ancient woods in your quest to eliminate Korax.

The game is divided into five main hubs, each of which contains a variety of branch levels that you'll need to visit in order to complete that particular hub's puzzle. Pulling switches and completing secondary puzzles in these branch levels will cause things to change and shift back in the hub, opening up new areas and allowing you to progress further. While the game isn't amazingly open-ended, this design does add an element of freedom and exploration that's sorely missing from the earlier *Doom*-type games. The end of each hub usually involves fighting a stronger boss enemy, of which there are several, ranging from the flying terror of the Death Wyvern, a demonic sorcerer known as the Heresiarch, your own undead masters, and of course Korax himself.

Hexen's weapon system is implemented differently to *Heretic*'s, as each of the three player classes can wield four unique weapons, the last of which must be found in segments. Rather than having separate ammo types for each, *Hexen* requires players to collect blue and green mana. Each class has one weak starting weapon (which can be used infinitely as it does not cost mana), one blue-mana-based weapon, one green-mana-based weapon, and one final weapon which requires both blue and green. The weapons are nicely balanced, and you won't find yourself relying on just one the whole time. Even the starting weapons are useful until the end, particularly the mage's sapphire wand which, while the game's weakest, allows you to take out even the toughest of enemies from a distance if you don't feel like going toe-to-toe with them.

The enemies themselves are a nicely varied bag of your typical fantasy-type creatures, and again are fairly well balanced throughout. As with most FPS games of the era, the AI here is basic, and the challenge is derived from the sheer volume of monsters encountered, as well as the odd strategically placed enemy blasting fireballs at you from a distant battlement. *Hexen* also includes plenty of good old "frantic-battle-against-hordes-of-foes-in-a-confined-space" sections to keep you on your toes. Of course, if you're finding things too easy, there are a total of five different difficulty levels to choose from, the hardest of which is sure to send you crying home to your mum as you get pummelled into a bloody pulp by hundreds of vicious beasties that can move much faster than their lower-skill counterparts.

Hexen has it all: great atmosphere, fantastic level design, gorgeous artwork, perfect balance and an immersive game world

Once you've punched, chopped, smashed, hacked and roasted your way across *Hexen*'s world, there's still more medieval mayhem to be had in Raven's official expansion pack, *Deathkings of the Dark Citadel*. Released in 1996, *Deathkings* includes three brand new hubs filled with much tougher levels than the original game that'll provide a real challenge for the die-hard *Hexen* fanatic. You'll know you're up against it when you find yourself battling four Death Wyverns on the same level, and that's just in the first hub. Only badasses need apply.

The very generous folks over at Raven kindly released *Hexen*'s source code to the public in 1999, which means that thanks to a few hard-working individuals, we can now all enjoy *Hexen* on our shiny new PCs (not to mention a myriad of other platforms) by downloading a compatible source port such as ZDoom (http://zdoom.org/). Don't forget that you'll still need the original game's IWAD file to play, though.

Most reviews of *Hexen* that I've ever read have ultimately awarded the game a distinctly average rating, which is something I've never been able to fathom. As far as I'm concerned, *Hexen* has it all: great atmosphere, fantastic level design, gorgeous artwork, perfect balance and an immersive game world. Add to this the fact that it's one of only a handful of FPS games to feature a medieval-style fantasy setting, and you've got a true DOS gem on your hands. Sod the majority; I'll happily list *Hexen* as one of my top five games of all time, and I encourage everyone who's never had the pleasure to grab themselves a copy and give it a try. Korax is waiting, human...

Some of the characters are beautifully drawn. Ugly, yes, but drawn well all the same

GAMESMASTER

SERIES ONE, EPISODE TWO

Neil Reive continues his trek back in time to 1992 when the classic television show *GamesMaster* helped bring video games to the masses and gave birth to the TV videogame show format

As *GamesMaster*'s computerised intro sequence comes to an end, the camera moves in on the show's host, Dominik Diamond, as he introduces the show. "Welcome to *GamesMaster*," he begins, "TVs only show devoted solely to videogames. So if the sentence 'Mario got stomped by a green koopa paratrooper' makes any sense to you, you're tuned to the right church. If it doesn't, and you're one of those people who think that Game Boy is a young scout doing bob-a-jobs, then watch on and erase that ignorance."

"The GamesMaster" sets the first challenge, and what better way to follow last episode's *Super Mario* outing by having *Sonic the Hedgehog* this time? The challenge is to collect 150 rings from the Green Hill Zone Act 2 in under two minutes. Even though there are only 163 rings in the entire act, the challenger, Alex Ferry from Stanmore, asks for the target to be 160. To commentate on the game with Domincic is *Sega Power*'s deputy editor Neil West. Alex has no problems collecting 160, completes the level within the time limit, and wins a *GamesMaster* Golden Joystick.

Dominik then introduces the reviews section: "First up, on the Amiga, the Bruce Lees of the future give a hearty ki-yai in *First Samurai*". Dave McCandless (*Zero* magazine) tells us that "it looks very Chinese takeaway. Lots of lotus trees and bamboo furniture, but underneath all this colourful exterior there's, um, a real, er, good game." Frank O'Connor (*C&VG* magazine) says that the game "features some beautiful graphics, brilliant sampled sound effects, bits of sampled messiah for good measure." The game is awarded an overall rating of 90%.

"Next, also on the Amiga," explains Dominik, "we enter the murky underworld of *Pit Fighter*. Three butch contestants trade below the belt action in an orgy of unrestrained violence." Dave tells us that "*Pit Fighter* is less of a beat-'em-up and more of a sort of kick-the-living-crap-out-of-everybody-up." "It's boring," exasperates Frank, "you don't have many moves. The

Magazine journos Dave McCandless (*Zero* magazine) and Frank O'Connor (*C&VG*) give their views of *First Samurai*, *Pit Fighter*, and *Double Dragon II*

Alex Ferry wins the *Sonic* challenge and a GamesMaster Golden Joystick

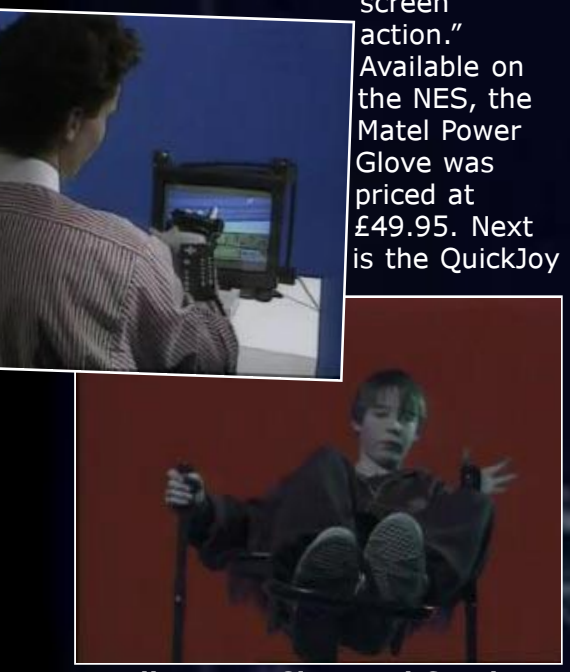
Co-commentator and video game journo, Neil West, watches on as Dom introduces the first challenge

"Welcome to GamesMaster, TVs only show devoted solely to videogames. So if the sentence 'Mario got stomped by a green koopa paratrooper' makes any sense to you, you're tuned to the right church." - Dominik Diamond

computer tends to decide what you're gonna do next." The average comments are reflected in the overall rating as it gets 59%.

"Finally," as Dom introduces the last review, "pulsating pixels of monochrome muscle on the Game Boy with *Double Dragon II*." "Cute. Safe. Nice. Cool," is Dave's rather short description of the game. "You walk along and smack people in the teeth, and that's about it," says Frank, before adding that "it is quite good fun as it turns out." That's a final rating of 70%.

This week's hardware feature includes the Power Glove: "the futuristic gauntlet that translates hand and arm movements into on-screen action." Available on the NES, the Matel Power Glove was priced at £49.95. Next is the QuickJoy Footpedal, which is ideal for car racing games was available for "most home computers" and was priced at £24.99. The Sega Action Chair is last to be looked and has the idea of moving around in the chair as you would move a joystick/d-pad. The mammoth Sega Action Chair was available for the Sega Mega Drive and cost £99.00.



Matel's Power Glove and Sega's Action Chair—Nintendo Wii style peripherals of their day

Tim Boone returns to commentate on the celebrity challenge...

"The biggest celeb of them all", the GamesMaster, introduces the Celebrity Challenge. The game is *Sonic Blastman* and the challenge is to blast a meteor that is heading to Earth. With three punches, the celebrity must save the planet. The person who records the highest score is the winner. Squaring up against each other for this round are British *Sonic Blastman* champion Paul Turner and former British Heavyweight Champion Gary Mason. Joining Dominik to commentate this time is *C&VG*'s editor Tim Boone. While Paul goes in with straight right hooks, racking up the scores, Gary tries various punch techniques, but is beaten by 332 to 331. Paul takes home a *GamesMaster* Golden Joystick.

...which is won by Sonic Blastman champion Paul Turner

The Consoletation Zone features tips on *Strider*, level 3, with the closing walls. As GamesMaster explains, "instead of trying to climb up one side of the wall, you should jump from side to side." The secret whistle's location in *Super Mario Bros. 3* on the first world is told to an eager gamer and to wrap off the tips feature, a young lad is told how to kill the baddies at the end of level two in *Robocop*.

The final challenge for the episode is on *Lemmings*. The player must guide 91% of the lemmings across one level in two minutes. Robert Clark from Leicester is the player chosen to take on this challenge. They "dragged him back screaming," Tom Watson from Renegade commentates with Dominik. Robert looses a few lemmings in an early mistake, but looks to have it under control. He guides the rest of the lemmings home, but it's not enough as he only has 87% of them.

Dominik closes the episode by, once again, donning his smoking jacket to go and have a "refreshing cup of camomile." He tells the audience that he'll "see [them] again in seven days," before disappearing into the haze of the church with the monk following closely behind. The camera pulls away as the closing theme kicks in, then the computer style closing credits roll and ends as 'Game Over' flashes on screen.

The last challenge of the show is a good one, but Robert Clark just fails to succeed

"You walk along and smack people in the teeth, and that's about it, [and] it is quite good fun as it turns out." - Frank O' Connor describing GameBoy Double Dragon II

TWILIGHT OF THE SPECTRUM

The Sinclair ZX Spectrum didn't really disappear in the early 1990s. As Richard Tarjan explains, in this first part of his huge Spectrum retrospective, Europe enjoyed many years of gaming from the rubber-keyed computer...

THE CLONES

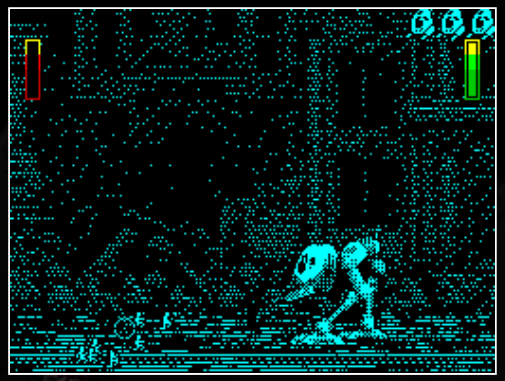
The last commercial game for the ZX Spectrum was *Dr. Who: Dalek Attack,* released in July of 1993, although the decline was easily noticeable from the beginning of that same year. From early 1993, software companies did not accept any new Spectrum games from developers, and the last of the Sinclair magazines, *Sinclair User* and *Your Sinclair*, ceased publication in May and September respectively—big blows for the community. New games release sections of still active press were practically empty, or even cancelled.

In 1992, there was still a relatively huge amount of software published, but in the next year the writing was on the wall: big software developers began leaving the 8-bit micros, and simultaneously moved to PC, Amiga, Atari ST, and the increasingly popular consoles.

Of course, the Spectrum was not the only 8-bit computer to feel the effect of the developer's defection to the 16-bits; its ever-popular rival the Commodore 64 and the Amstrad CPC were both suffering as well.

Quite an interesting fact is that there were a lot more ZX Spectrum games developed than for any of the 16 bit platforms. About 12,000 games were released for the ZX Spectrum in what is considered as the "classic" 12 years era of April 1982 to July 1993. This kind of productivity still stands head and shoulders above any other platform that has come before or after Sir Clive's little black machine. And the story was not finished yet. In fact, the most interesting part is yet to be told...

An early Spectrum clone from the ex-Soviet Union



A massive 256k of memory was needed for *the game Walker*

A second generation of ZX machines cropped up in the territory of the ex-Soviet Union (significantly in Russia, but in another smaller states as well). For the average Russian, a PC/AT was too expensive, so they cracked the original ZX Spectrum and rebuild them from Russian parts. The first 48K machines were produced as early as 1985, and in 1991, the boom of the 128K clones began.

It became the school-computer (christened Hobbit 64K), but sooner or later, other clones were produced by bigger or smaller companies such as Scorpion, Kay, ATM, and who knows how many other mutations exist. Even

Some games like *Wolfenstein 2004* even used up to 83 colours

individuals produced their own cloned computers. After the end of their working day, lots of people, who were employed in electric companies, started to make these clones. This was facilitated by the fact that the assembling circuits diagrams were freely distributable in most cases. Because of this, the Pentagon, one of the most popular ZX clones, came into existence.

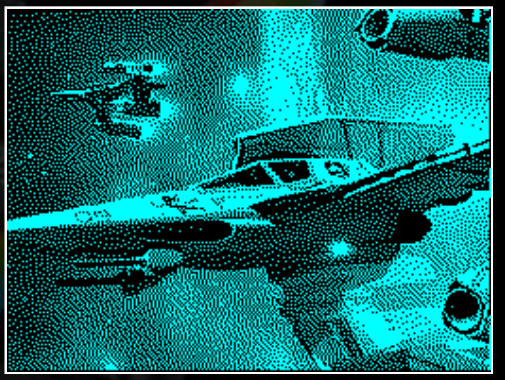
The street value of these clones was also in a different league of their own when compared to the Amiga or PC. In comparison, the price tag of a contemporary Amiga or PC was between 300 and 1000 USD, where as a Pentagon or Scorpion was only 20-100 USD. The situation was so widespread that even the clones had variants and were not always 100% compatible with each other. The compatibility of different clones was even worse.

This situation led to widespread software-incompatibility. New software

***Mario Islands* was another game that used up to 83 colours**

was not compatible with every clone, and not even with the original ZX Spectrum, as programmers would produce and test the software on their own personal cloned platform. Of worthy mention is the C64/ZX war, which began in Europe, also happened in the ex-USSR between the owners of various ZX-clones.

The, originally English-developed Beta-128 disc interface became the dominant mass storage device of Russian ZX Spectrum clones. Cassette tapes very quickly disappeared along with standard 48K machines. The



***Dune: Imperia 2* needed a 7MHz Turbo Mode**

For the average Russian, a PC/AT was too expensive, so they cracked the original ZX Spectrum and rebuild them from Russian parts

***Seasons of Sakura 16C* used an astonishing 1024K memory and a new graphics mode: 16C**

system could control up to four 640K double density floppy drives as 3”; 3.5”, and 5.25” formats were all supported. Some simplified versions only used two floppy disks. Most of the clones had this controller integrated into their motherboard. However, the Beta system was not very successful in the UK or Europe.

The new system certainly gave new opportunities for software developments: 640K was huge compared to the 128K maximum of the old tape system. It could hold even more, because data of the software is often stored compressed.

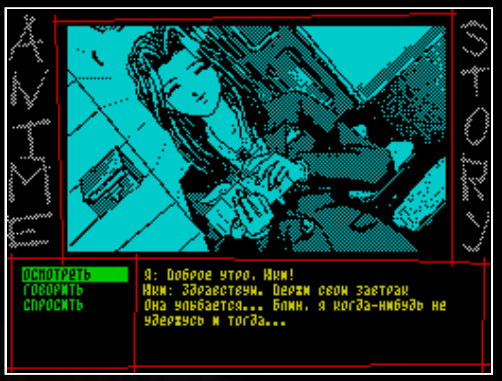
Most programs ran fine in the above configuration, although some games needed extra memory (for example 256K was needed for *Walker, Atomix,* and *Country of Myths*)

With this method, even 800K could be packed onto a single disk. If we look at the ZX Spectrum 128K and the Beta-128 disk system combination in computing history, it is the missing evolution step between the classic 8-bit machines (ZX Spectrum 48K, Commodore 64, and Amstrad CPC) and the much more powerful 16-bit micros. So, the new standard became the 128K machine with a Beta-128 interface along with a very cheap stereo tuning of the AY chip. In the old days, 5.25” floppies were used, but nowadays, of course, we have the 3.5” format.

Most programs ran fine in the above configuration, although some games needed extra memory (for example 256K was needed for *Walker*, *Atomix*, and *Country of Myths*). Some games even needed special ULA modes such as GigaScreen (*Homer Simpson in Russia*), multicolour of up to 83 colours (*Wolfenstein 2004*, *Mario Islands*, and *Hexagonal Filler*), or the 7MHz Turbo Mode (*Dune: Imperia 2*). Games that demanded the full 512K of RAM, like *Starcraft*, were very rare in the Spectrum world, but one game, *Seasons of Sakura 16C* needed at least 1024K. However, this was a fairly different category, as it used the detailed new graphics mode 16C.

While most of the games ran well on 128K of memory, using 256K resulted in a very speedy game (*Crime Santa Claus De Ja Vu*, *Homer Simpson in Russia 2*). If digitised and other effects were integrated into the game, the optional 512K would also be extremely helpful (*Smagly 3*). *Season of Sakura* could use memory of up to 4096K, utilising the above 128K part as cache memory. These giant games were usually conversions from other platforms, as the authors converted the sprites and effects directly from the source material.

Although some developers

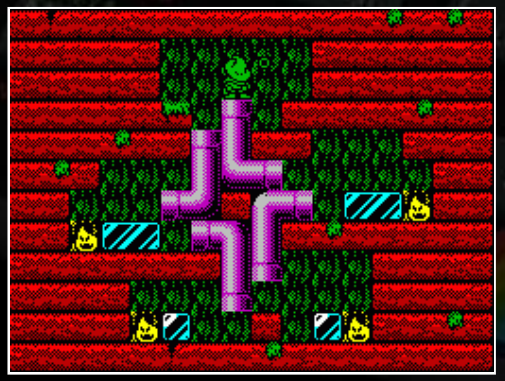


***Anime Story* fit a whole 640k Floppy Disk**

produced games that required over 128K of memory, this meant that the game was virtually beyond the means of the standard Spectrum user. Most owners had a 128K machine with only developers owning more powerful computers. However, it is worth mentioning that most of these games were successfully converted to 128K standard machines by different authors. In trying to motivate owners in expanding the memory of their machine or buying a more powerful clone, these games simply arrived too

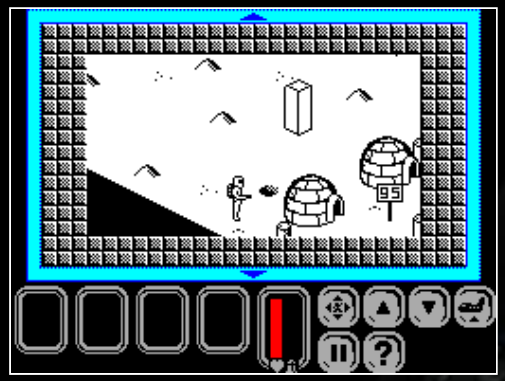
Games like *Crime Santa Claus De Ja Vu* could work with 128k, but ran faster with 256k

***Homer Simpson in Russia 2* was another game that made use of 256k**

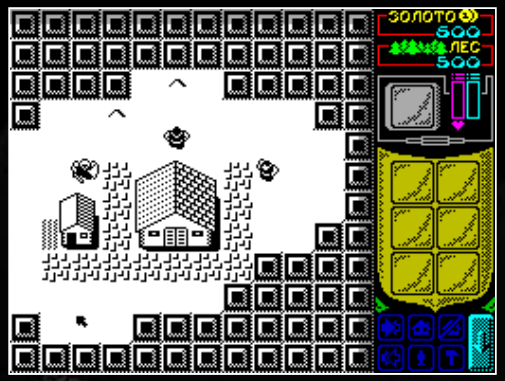


***Fire ‘n’ Ice* has an intro screen and different music for each level**

***Mortal Kombat* on the ZX Spectrum? Yep, it happened**



***UFO 1* is one of the few multi-disk games available and similar to...**



***...Black Raven 1* filled two floppy disks**

***Pang* supported the new graphics hardware setup**

***Time Gal*, nearly 190mb, and the first ZX CD-ROM game**

late in most cases.

Going back to turbo mode. So far, only *Wolfenstein 2004* supports higher FPS in turbo mode, while another programs only run faster. Also, only this game supports the video cache memory, giving the turbo coefficient from the usual 1.4x to 2.x. *Crime Santa Claus* and *Super Mario Bros* show extra "snowing" effects in turbo mode. Of course, developers of Beta-128 never thought that a ZX Spectrum game would occupy a full 640K disk, or the "Insert next disk..." would appear during the gameplay.

Typically, graphic adventures (*Anime Story*, *Nocturnal Illusion*) or puzzle games (*Double Xinox*, *New Puzzle*) required the space of a whole disk. Games with more episodes were also usually copied into one single disk by the authors (*Crime Santa Claus Deja Vu*, *Smagly 3*). The 640K game compo entries certainly used a full diskette (*Cheitnot Chess*, *Wolfenstein 2004*). Similarly occupying a full disk were those mega-games, which included intro screens, different music for levels, bi-lingual communication, etc. (*Fire and Ice*, *Mortal Kombat 1*, *Pussy*).

Multi-disk games were less common, but Copper Feet did produce some: *UFO 1* and *Black Raven 1* filled two floppies. *Last Hero of the Light Force* adventure and the network playable *Net Walk* were also released on double disks. The already mentioned *Season of Sacura* (both versions—monochrome and colour-per-pixel) occupied three full disks with its PC-converted graphics.

So, a new method emerged (the need to build in two chips, some resistors, and condensers) for more better and advanced looking games. It was called "colour-per-pixel" or "16C" mode. It used the standard 256x192 screen ration with conventional 15 colours, but each pixel could have individual colours (it is only 15 colours and not 16—despite its name—because black does not have normal and bright variants). The result is very similar to EGA screens and very nice compared to the ordinary Spectrum, and any colour-clash is eliminated. Some games by Alone Coder supported it, such as *Ball Quest*, *Pang 16C,* and *Time Gal*. *Time Gal* was nearly 190 megabytes and a Sony PlayStation conversion, plus the first ZX game which required a CD-ROM. Worthy of mention is that these games ran fine on 3.55MHz, so it is a really big success both from the sides of hardware and software development.

Music and sound effects also went through many changes. The three-channel mono sound was soon replaced with three-channel ACB stereo. Later came the different D/A converters, such as Covox (1x8 bit), Stereo Covox (2x8bit), and Soundrive (4x8 bit). Sampling frequency can be 10-12 kHz with these devices, in turbo mode 15-16 kHz could be reached.

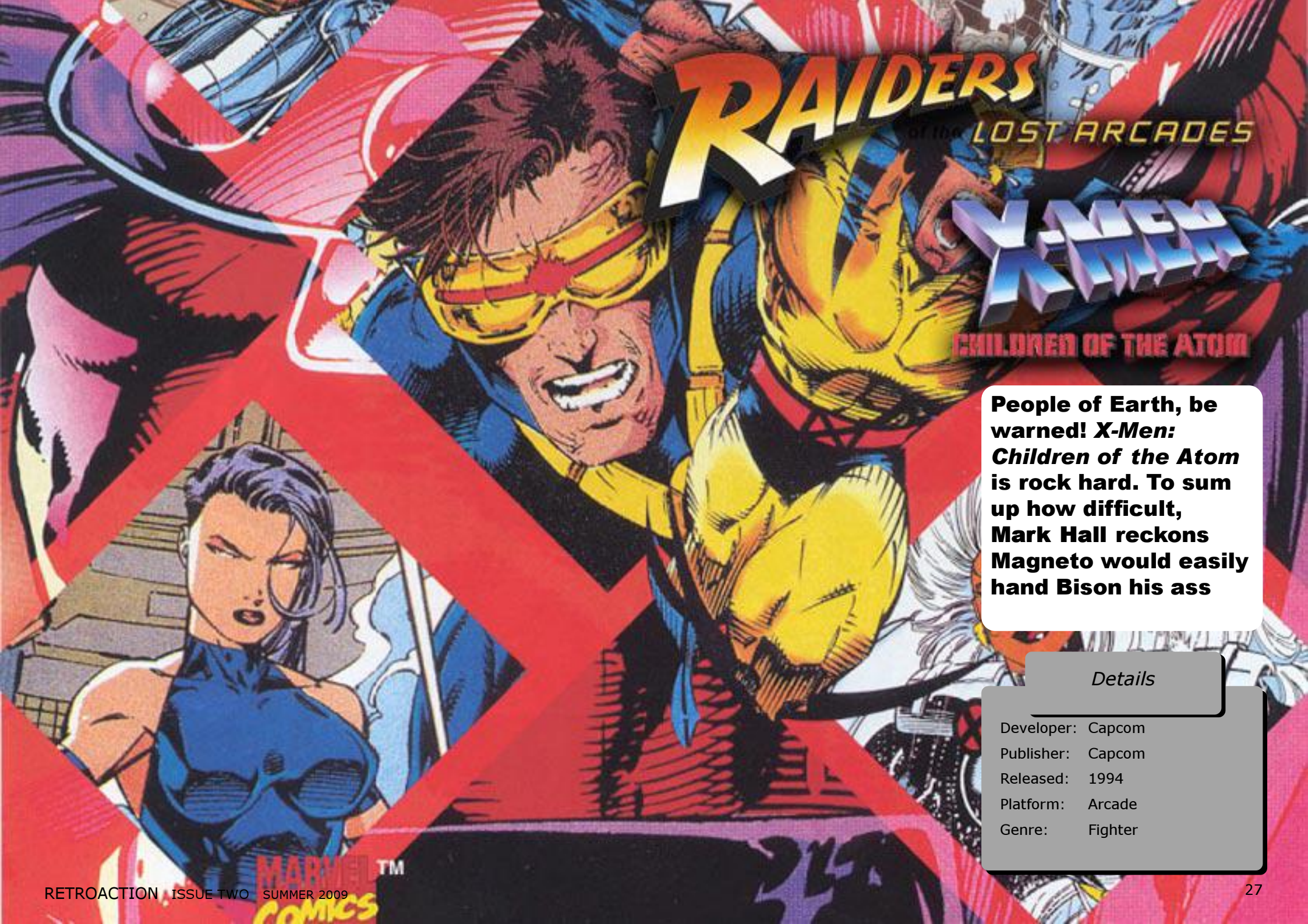
With the General Sound card nearly Amiga quality, sound could be produced on four channels (4x8 bit, 37.5 kHz). Significantly, not many new software releases were written for GS, but old classics were cracked, and effects and music were added to them. If you were to see GS128 or GS512 included in the game's title, then this meant that it supported the 128K or 512K version of General Sound card.

The next novelty was the six channel Turbo Sound card that became widespread. It had a second AY-chip beside the original and because one AY chip can play sound in stereo, two AY chips could quadruple the music and sound effects.

To be continued... (New generation and making and distributing of games)

***Pussy*, based on the *Titanic* movie, if you must know**

Multi-disk games were less common,
but Copper Feet did produce some:
UFO 1 and *Black Raven 1* filled two floppies



People of Earth, be warned! *X-Men: Children of the Atom* is rock hard. To sum up how difficult, Mark Hall reckons Magneto would easily hand Bison his ass

Details

Developer:	Capcom
Publisher:	Capcom
Released:	1994
Platform:	Arcade
Genre:	Fighter

X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM

X-Men: Children of the Atom is a wonderful fighter, originally released by Capcom in 1994. The game was powered by their CPS-2 board and was used throughout for later versions. Capcom didn't really own the rights to a home console version, so a begrudged partnership was formed with Acclaim who later published the Sega Saturn version for the USA and Europe, a PC version and finally the PS1. Strangely though, Capcom did the Saturn port for Japan (the best port), with Probe handling the other systems. Along with *Street Fighter II*, both games are considered amongst the most technical and finest of a long line of beat 'em ups… and packed to the rafters with super jumps, super combos and probably one of the best tech scraps on Earth.

If you haven't already guessed it, *X-Men: COTA* is a *Streetfighter*-esque one-on-one slugfest, and

Wolverine takes a swipe at Sentinel

Psyclops lets rip with an optic blast

features an exclusive line-up of super heroes to rival that of any fighter before it. Their objective? Stop the villain Magneto from wreaking havoc on human civilization. There are six X-Men characters and four of their enemies, making a total of ten characters that the player can choose from. The game even includes its own take on Chun-Li for the X-Men fighting world in the guise of Psylocke. Each character has their own moves and special attacks unique to them. For instance, Cyclops has his optic blast; Storm can fly and produce storm attacks (lightning and wind), while Wolverine has his powerful brawling and clawing skills. What makes the game really cool is you even get to play as the villains, which was something new… with secret characters such as Juggernaught and Akuma thrown in, which all adds up to even more Capcom loveliness. The

A fried Silver Samurai as Storm uses lightning bolt attacks

only downside is that Gambit is nowhere to be seen, and that guy rocked.

The matches are played over a series of best-out-of-three one-on-one matches. As well as Each character has a power gauge that builds up as the player performs a run of continual special moves. This gauge starts at level one, reaches level two when it becomes half-full, and when it reaches max, the player can then perform an special move. However, as is the norm with one-on-one fighters, each use of a special move will decrease your character's power guage a notch. Finding a successful balance of normal and special moves is the key to beating the game. Besides the usual moves found in one-one-one fighter games, *X-Men: COTA* features super jumps and the ability to roll away from the opponent.

The arcade version is amazing (along with the Saturn port), while all the other versions are still good, but unfortunately dogged by poor frame rate, long loading times, and horrible slowdown. Every version features the voice-over dialogue for the many characters from the original cartoon, along with the original arcade music. *X-Men: COTA* is a joy to play, and I've been playing it for several days now, I've been playing versus games all my life, but none have ever proved this difficult before. The controls aren't as responsive as *Street Fighter II*, but you kinda get used to them the longer you play.

X-Men: COTA is a really well done game. Graphically, everything looks incredible, the player animations and array of moves are bordering on radical. The sound effects are so badass, especially when a character yells out "SHOCKWAVE!!!" It's by no means the best of Capcom's 2D fighters, but it set a massive standard and is still a smoking hot game. If it weren't for the insane difficulty and slightly unresponsive controls, I'd have no problems putting *X-Men: COTA* above the likes of *Street Fighter II* any day of the week.

That's gotta hurt... Psylocke smacks one right into Colossus

X-Men: COTA is a *Streetfighter*-esque one-on-one slugfest, and features an exclusive line-up of super heroes to rival that of any fighter before it

CRONOSOFT: THE INTERVIEW

Our very own (domesticated) Gnome managed to corner homebrew hero and devoted indie publisher Simon Ullyatt, and chat with him about Cronosoft, new games on old machines, bedroom coding, and obscure 8-bit micros

[*splATTR* – ZXS] Proper cassette inlays are still around

Not that Cronosoft needs any sort of formal introduction, but I'm pretty sure that some of our non-European or more console oriented readers might just need a bit of info before going on and actually reading this very interview. Well, for your information, oh deluded souls, Cronosoft (http://www.cronosoft.co.uk/) is one the few publishers of brand new games and utilities for retro computers, that supports all the major 8-bit formats and even some rather obscure ones. It has already published dozens of games and utilities for 8-bit micros, including such gems as *SEUD*, *Stranded*, *Egghead in Space*, *splATTR*, *Platform Game Designer*, *Church of Death*, and *Football Glory*. Oh, and, should you wonder, Cronosoft is indeed based in the UK.

Gnome: Let's start with a personal question. Who is the brain responsible for Cronosoft? Where does he live? What does he drink? What does he enjoy?
Simon Ullyatt: My name is Simon Ullyatt, though I'm probably better known around the 'net and forums as chaosmongers. I live in a coastal rural area of Lincolnshire in England, though not far from the seaside holiday town of Skegness. I'm known to enjoy a pint or two of "snakebite & black" every now and then!

For a normal job, I sell old stuff on eBay full time, though I also work in a pub. I play bass guitar in the band Moes Anvil (www.moesanvil.co.uk).

G: How about letting us know a bit about said brain's gaming history? Favourite games? Genres? Home micros?
SU: I got my first computer, a Sinclair ZX81, in 1982, followed by a Spectrum 48K in 1984. Over the years I've collected 100's of systems, significant ones to me being the Commodore 64 and Oric-1/Atmos, though the Spectrum has always been number one for me. I have some of the more unusual systems too, like the CGL Sord M5, Mattel Aquarius, Sharp MZ-700, Texas TI-99, etc.

I love arcade games that have simple but refined gameplay. Arcade games like *Defender*, *Robotron*, *Tempest*, and *Gyruss*.

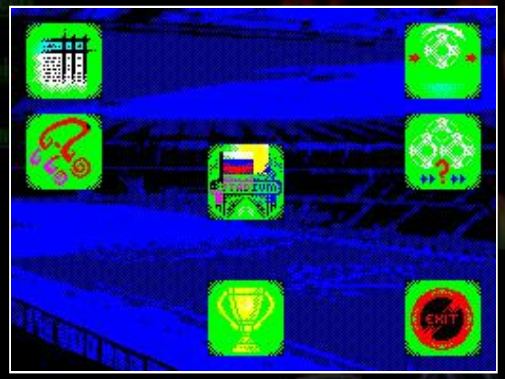
G: Now, on to the main subject of this interview. How exactly did Cronosoft begin?
SU: A few years ago—I think it was around 2002—I'd just finished editing the last fanzine/magazine dedicated to the Oric computer, found myself looking for something new to do, and had the idea of starting a new software house for people who were writing new games for old systems. As a test of the idea, I posted a message on the World of Spectrum forums, and had a response from a couple of interested programmers, namely Jonathan Cauldwell and Graham Shaw, both having unreleased games already written. So I quickly got some artwork made up, and the tapes made, and that was the beginning...

G: Publishing brand new games for retro computers is a noble cause indeed. Which platforms do you support?
SU: Currently, we are supporting the Sinclair ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64, Commodore Vic 20, Commodore 16/+4, and Amstrad CPC.

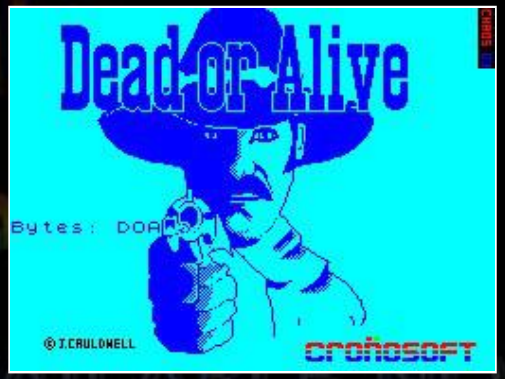
I'd very much like to broaden this to include the Dragon 32, Oric, ZX81, TI-99, Atari 400/800, Mattel Aquarius, Sord M5, and more obscure computers, and eventually the Atari 2600 or even the 3DO and CD32.

G: Have you ever managed to discover, rescue, and release any games that failed to hit the shelves back in the day?
SU: Yes, the first few games *Gloop* and *Dead or Alive* by Jonathan Cauldwell were both unreleased games from around 1994, whereas *Hop 'n' Chop* and *Football Glory*, by the Shaw Brothers, were originally intended for release commercially in the early 1990s; I believe by Atlantis Software. *Stranded*, by Bob Smith, was also written a long time ago, though, of course, he's now back heavily into game writing.

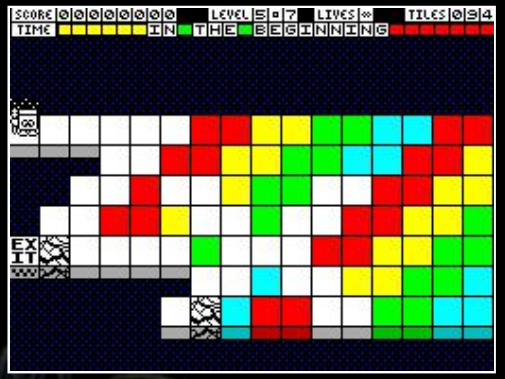
G: Any thoughts of producing cartridges (for the C64 or the CPC+ for example) or even console games?
SU: If possible, I'd love to do this, though it's a bit easier said than done! The Atari 2600 seems the most viable at the moment, as the necessary electronic parts are more readily available, though if I



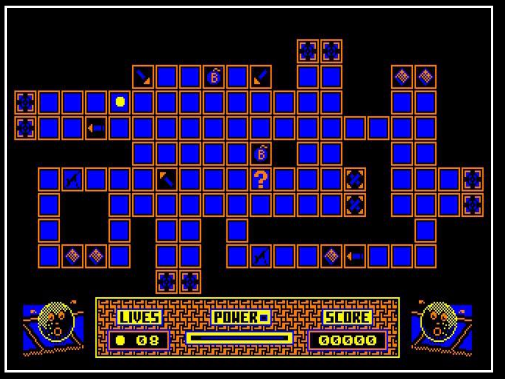
[*Football Manager 2005* - ZXS] Icon driven footie fun on the humble Spectrum!



[*Dead or Alive* – ZXS] The art of the loading screen lives on at Cronosoft



[*Stranded 2.5* – ZXS] Top quality puzzler with top quality graphics



[*Iron Sphere* - CPC] Amstrad-powered puzzle gaming

could get some people with more expertise involved, it would be a great help. I'm not overly familiar with burning EPROMS, etc. myself.
G: How exactly are them tapes produced? What's the process of actually producing, packaging and distributing, say, a Speccy game?
SU: It varies a little between formats. For Spectrum games, I use a real Spectrum 128 to save out the games onto multiple cassette recorders, but with the Amstrad CPC games, I have them burned onto CD's as audio files, which I can copy over to cassette. The inlays are printed and cut manually onto gloss paper. It's very time consuming, though I need to keep the costs down to as little as I can. The artwork is often done by our great contact Graz Richards, who comes up with some very professional standard illustrations.

G: How many games has Cronosoft published so far?

SU: I've just had a count up, and I think we're at about 51...

G: Any personal favourites? Is there a game you are incredibly proud to have published?
SU: It's really hard to narrow it down to one, but *Gamex* is a superb masterpiece of programming, and is really enjoyable. Also *Farmer Jack and the Hedge Monkeys* was a real treat, as it was a conversion of one of my favourite arcade games *Lady Bug*, written after a request I once made.

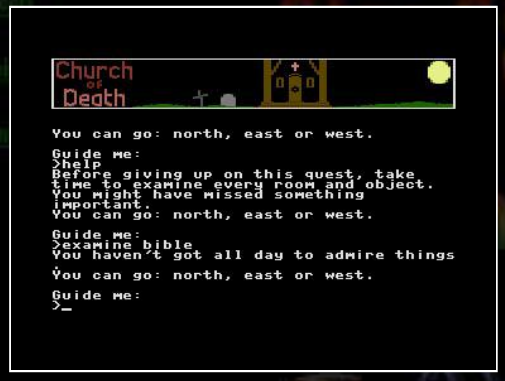
G: What's your biggest seller so far?
SU: I think the original *Egghead In Space* has sold the most, though the Vic 20 releases are also very popular.

G: Oh, and does Cronosoft really mean to support the indie (or is it *bedroom coding*) spirit? Would you actually accept and publish a game sent to you by a 20 year old who has never released anything before?
SU: Definitely, some of the best games are written by unknown programmers in their bedrooms! Like with music, indie labels are there for people who really love the stuff that people create—it doesn't have to be big business (smiles and winks).

G: How could/would Cronosoft help a budding retro developer?
SU: I believe Cronosoft can get the game noticed—we have lots of people who take an interest in the games at the retro-gaming shows, and great support from magazines such as *Retro Gamer*, *Micro Mart*, and indeed yourselves, help spread the word in a way that maybe wouldn't happen ordinarily. I think (hope) we add value to a game, and make it something that fans might want to own rather than just play. Plus, of course, we're part of a friendly community who are always eager to help.

G: Do you feel people will keep on caring for 8-bit independently produced even after current gen consoles have horribly aged?
SU: There will always be a section of the population that would have grown up with a particular system, whether that be the Spectrum, SNES, PlayStation, or Xbox 360—I guess everyone will have their own favourite era of gaming that will never change. If you were an 8-bit fan at one time, I think you'll always be one!

G: And finally, what does the future hold for Cronosoft? Any exciting new releases?
SU: We've just released *Joe Gunn* on tape for the Commodore 64, and *Glove* is soon to be released for the Dragon 32 / Tandy Color. As for other games.... they seem to just pop up in my inbox every now and again...!


Church of Death
You can go: north, east or west.
Guide me:
>help
Before giving up on this quest, take time to examine every room and object. You might have missed something important.
You can go: north, east or west.
Guide me:
>examine bible
You haven't got all day to admire things
You can go: north, east or west.
Guide me:
>_

[*Church of D*eath – C16] Quality horror text adventuring to get the brain imagining

[*Blue Star* – Vic20] It's amazing what the humble Vic can do at the hands of a capable indie developer...

[*The Castle of Madness* – C64] Oh, yes. The C64 disk drive won't be ignored by this forthcoming CRPG

[*Farmer Jack and the Hedge Monkeys* - ZXS] The most surreal and innovative adaptation of Pac-Man possible

REVIEWS

RETROACTION REVIEW POLICY

There are many homebrew games released every month, never mind every few months, so how do we cover them all? The simple fact is that we can't. Plus, we don't feel that it is practical to have our writers use their valuable time by playing and reviewing bad games, just to moan about them. No, we would rather tell you about great games. So, it's unlikely that you will ever see a bad homebrew game reviewed here.

That's not to say that we will be hyping up the games that we do review, though. You won't see the likes of 98% ratings here—in my opinion, no game is worth that, not even commercial classics—but what you will see is a fair and honest opinion based on what the reviewer has played, not what they expect or want. So consider any rating of 80% and over as great. Only the truly remarkable games will ever achieve a rating of 90% or more.

DETAILS BOX

This is where you will find all the information and ratings on the game: developer, publisher, platform(s), download link(s), video clip(s), and genre.

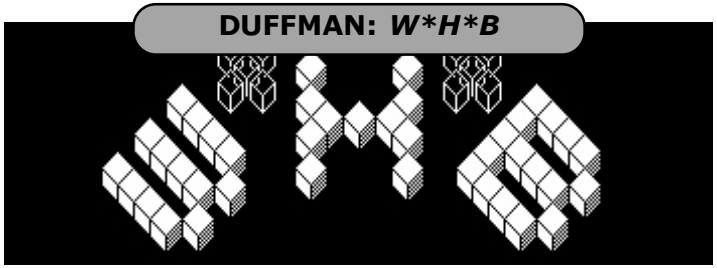
Four game components are rated individually as a percentage Here's what we look for in each:
GRAPHICS: Colour, animation, scrolling, collision-detection, design, and speed.
SOUND: Music, spot effects, and speech.
GAMEPLAY: Movement, control interface, difficulty, design, and fun element.
OVERALL: What we honestly think of the game, be it praise or a good kicking.

Occasionally, a game comes along that generates a mixed response from gamers. The "Not so fast..." box is our writers' opportunity to butt in and voice their opinion on a big review.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN PLAYING THIS SEASON

NEIL: *ROCK BOSHERS*

DUFFMAN: *W*H*B*



MARK: *STAR SABRE*

MATTY: *SUPAPLEX*

33 **ROCK BOSHERS** Windows
35 **BETILED!** Amstrad CPC
36 **LEGION OF THE DAMNED** C64
37 **PHANTOMAS TALES #1: MARSPORT** ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC
38 **W*H*B** ZX Spectrum
39 **K.O. CRUISER** Atari 2600
40 **STAR SABRE 128K** Amstrad CPC
41 **CAPTAIN S** Windows, Linux
42 **DEATHCHASE** Dragon 32 / Tandy CoCo
43 **FROGGER** ZX Spectrum
44 **NANAKO DESCENDS TO HELL** Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum
45 **I NEED SPEED** ZX Spectrum, MSX
46 **GIDDY 3** Windows
47 **DANGER TOWER** MSX
48 **SORT 'EM** Amstrad CPC
49 **BANGER MANAGEMENT** ZX Spectrum
50 **DEEP DUNGEON** MSX
51 **HORACE GOES SKIING** Windows
52 **ETERNAL LIGHT** Amstrad CPC
53 **SUPAPLEX** ZX Spectrum
54 **SEUD** ZX Spectrum

ROCK BOSHERS

Remember *Red Faction* – that innovative PC game of 2001? Well, it's back with a vengeance. Neil Reive explains all...

These rocks are destructible, and you can clear a path with your gun
Zombies. Lots of them. Don't let them touch you as they hurt. Shoot them down, quickly
HI-SCORE: 1500
HI ROOM TIME: 45s
SCORE: 77
RM TIME: 17s
3
ITEM
MAP
Super Zombies. These ankle draggers need shooting twice
Soldiers. Watch out for these guys as they shoot on sight
That's you, that is. Armed with a gun, you take on all comers

HURTLING THROUGH THE COLD VACUUM THE PASSENGERS SPECULATED WILDLY ON WHAT THEY MIGHT ENCOUNTER ON THIS NEW WORLD.
JOSTLING OVER SKETCHES OF THE MARTIAN CANALS, THEY MARKED OUT THEIR CLAIMS FOR TERRITORY.
FIRE

One of the many superb intro sequences

The first level eases you in gently, before the chaos

For those who don't know, *Red Faction* is a first-person shooter game that was released in 2001 for the PC, with ports for the PS2 and Mac following soon after. One interesting feature of the game was the innovative "Geo-Mod" technology used in the game design. This provides destructible environments, allowing the player to destroy certain sections of the scenery in the game.

Rock Boshers is a demake (a remake of a recent game on older-generation hardware) of *Red Faction* using the Game Maker software package. Initially developed for the TIGSource Bootleg Demakes competition a few months back by Dugan (a.k.a. moogled), it has now received the finishing touches.

As with *Red Faction*, the game is set on Mars in the distant future with the player controlling a miner who helps rebel against the Ultor Corporation. With new opportunities on the recently invaded Mars cropping up, many people took up job positions there. However, things didn't exactly go to plan and a revolt against the mining company began.

The game is viewed from above and a bit to the bottom, as it were. This means that the sprites are quite small, but they're clear and you get the advantage of seeing the whole screen at once—as you spend a lot of time rushing around madly, this is quite useful. Similarly to games like *Gauntlet*, the levels are designed in a mazelike structure with keys unlocking doorways – this makes the game much more complicated and enjoyable as you try to fight your way around it.

As you make your way through the levels, there will be lots of enemies to deal with, including zombies and gun-toting soldiers. Of course, they do their best to stop you by any means. To fight back, you have in your possession a rifle that can fire off a shot at a time. What

All the little touches here and there greatly add to the game's atmosphere

NOW WHERE AM I? THESE ZOMBIES LOOK WEAK, BUT COULD HURT ME IF THEY WERE TO GET TOO CLOSE.
FIRE
HI-SCORE: 1500
HI ROOM TIME: 25s
SCORE: 17
RM TIME: 25
MAP

And just in case you're one of these people who don't read manuals, here is a hint

POW! A bullet flies out of your gun and head straight for a soldier. It's either you or them

A lot of levels will require you solving a simple puzzle or collecting a key

that really means is that once the bullet disappears, either into a wall or enemy, then you are ready to fire again—similar to the firing method in *Gauntlet*. Additional rockets can be picked up in limited packs.

The game comes in two versions: the pixel sharp and filtered versions. The pixel sharp version has slightly better looking graphics as the pixels have been scaled crisply, but the filtered version can be used in case of video card compatibility issues. The game's options include a single player mode, multiplayer modes, and an unlockable *Asteroids* style mini-game called *Rockaroids*.

It's very unusual to see such a classy game appear amongst the platform, shoot-'em-up, and puzzle games. Don't let the strategy element put you off, because this is a very absorbing game with plenty of action that will really test your abilities. The fun in *Rock Boshers* stems from its flexibility and its playability. With a multitude of options, a multiplayer game, and an unlockable mini-game, the lifespan of *Rock Boshers* is a long one indeed.

Graphically, with its Spectrum style graphics, the game itself couldn't look any simpler. The presentation is excellent and includes an authentic Speccy loading screen, an atmospheric intro sequence, and great level design throughout. The levels are little more than plainly drawn lines and the sprites are figure stick men. This is its charm. Minimalist graphics do have their place and its here. Too many colours on screen could have made it unplayable.

There's a suitably moody intro tune and the few sound effects that are scattered throughout the game are adequately produced. Once the game gets going, though, it's hard to remember if there's any sound, you're in too deep concentrating merely to stay alive.

If there is a fault with the game then it's with the controls. A game like this is best played on either a gamepad or joystick, but there is no compatibility for use of a standard game controller. You either have to use the keyboard (the dreaded WASD or arrow key configurations) or an Xbox 360 controller. Hopefully, further updates will be made to the game that includes standard controller compatibility.

Although *Rock Boshers* may look like a simple game, it's the lateral thinking demanded from the cunning design that makes it such a classic game, and one that will keep you coming back for more.

With a multitude of options, a multiplayer game, and an unlockable mini-game, the lifespan of Rock Boshers is a long one indeed

DETAILS

Developer:	Dugan
Platform:	Windows
Weblink:	Home page
Emulator:	N/A
Genre:	Arcade

RATINGS

Graphics:	71%
Sound:	84%
Gameplay:	94%
Overall:	**91%**

An absolute classic of a game. A must have

BETILED!

Arguably, the greatest CPC puzzle game has already been released with *Groops!* *BeTiled!* looks similar, but does it play similar? Duffman finds out...

After being available on the ZX Spectrum and MSX platforms since 2007, the Amstrad CPC version of *BeTiled!* is finally here. Programmed by Zogo, *BeTiled!*—the last CEZ CPC release—is a colourful puzzle game in a similar style to *Bejeweled* and the aforementioned *Groops!*.

Dr. Cirilus is not the most stable person you would want to meet and as the old saying goes, he's not exactly the full shilling. You see, he is one of many mad men who wish to rule over the world and he sees his opportunity by extracting energy from the videogames' essential crystals.

From years of research, Dr. Cirilus has discovered a way to safely extract the energy of these precious crystals. However, the crystals are unpredictable when they are in contact with oxygen, resulting in them exploding if handled for prolonged periods of time. To prevent any disastrous explosions and the destruction of all life as we know it, you, as Dr. Cirilus' assistant, have to help him extract the energy from the coloured crystals.

As usual with CEZ games, there are plenty of game modes including arcade, normal, and special. The game comes with the choice of Spanish and English language, as well as a manual and inlay artwork.

It might not play exactly like *Groops!*, but it sure does have the panic factor

AFTER YEARS OF RESEARCH, THE MAD SCIENTIST DR CIRILUS HAS FOUND OUT THE WAY OF GETTING ENERGY FROM THE ESSENTIAL CRYSTALS OF VIDEOGAMES. HELP HIM JOINING THEM BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT, OR BEWARE OF A DEVASTATING BLAST!! LET'S GO!...

Some great cut-scenes sets the story for the game

You couldn't have asked for a more colourful game on the CPC

The presentation of the game is class, from the intro, graphics, and sound—which is nice considering that the coders could have pulled a fast one and just done a quick Speccy port. The graphics are colourful and clear. The main theme is jolly in its nature, although this ends as the game begins.

The option screen shows the start, and modes, of which there are two to choose from: arcade and normal. Arcade mode is the story mode, where as the normal mode is just play for points. As with *Groops!*, *BeTiled!* starts with all the blocks filling the screen and it's your job to match the crystals already there. This is achieved by placing the cursor over a crystal, pressing fire, and moving the joystick in the desired direction—up, down, left, or right—in the hope of matching a row of three or more.

The energy levels you need to gather from each coloured crystal are displayed at the bottom of the screen. Once you've got enough energy (e.g. matched three diamonds of each colour), you will advance to the next level. The required energy level increases each level, making the game progressively harder. Apparently, there is a special mode that will become available once you reach level six, although, due to the progressive difficulty of the game, I've yet to encounter this. There are also points gained from matching crystals and if you achieve a high score then you can enter your name on the high score table – this all adds an extra notch to the replay value.

BeTiled! sure is addictive with that "just one more game" value, and should keep you coming back for more time and time again. Everything is top quality, from the presentation, intro sequence, the graphics, sound, and, most importantly, the gameplay. It all comes together to form an excellent game.

DETAILS

Developer:	CEZ
Platform:	Amstrad CPC
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	WinAPE
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	90%
Sound:	83%
Gameplay:	89%
Overall:	**88%**

One of the best puzzle games available...

LEGION OF THE DAMNED

A C64 game in the style of Golden Axe? Yes please. Duffman survives skirmishes with zombies, mummies, and vamiresses to bring us the low-down

That Queen Stryxia, eh? She's a bit of an evil bugger. Not content with being Queen, she's also got her minions to stomp around making life miserable for everyone in poor old land of Hameria.

Fortunately, the poor sods have managed to scrimmage enough cash together to hire a couple of mercenary warriors. The sword-wielding Amazon (with her whirlwind spells) and the axe throwing Barbarian (with his meteor spells) answer their cries of help and the money incentive sealed the deal.

The only way to free the land and people of Hameria from the vile clutches of Queen Stryxia is to pay a visit to her temple hideaway and put a stop to her evil plans. Easier said than done, though, as the journey is a hard slog from your home forest.

Word must have gotten out about your intentions as the hordes of minions have been unleashed and are after your blood. As you tread the treacherous path to Queen Stryxia's domain, you'll confront all manner of assailants: shuffling zombies, bow and arrow-wielding mummies, flying vampiresses, and many more nasty demons.

The game can be played by one or two players. Joystick port 1 controls the Barbarian, while port 2 controls the Amazon. Although the Amazon starts off with five lives to the Barbarian's three, the Barbarian, arguably, has the advantage with his long-range axe.

To protect yourself, you have your trusty weapon to use against them as well as magic spells. Amazon has her sword, which can be used at close range, and whirlwind magic. The barbarian uses an axe to throw from distances, while his magic spell is the meteor shower. Barbarian's spell is activated by pressing the 'K' key, while the Amazon can use magic with a press of 'S'. Spells work like a smart bomb, which take out the entire enemy on-screen.

The characters' lives are represented by individual blocks on the bottom of the screen. Every time you're hit, a block disappears. Once all blocks have gone, then it's game over. However, extra lives are obtained for every 100,000 points you obtain. They can replenish their health and magic powers with blue potions and the more potions held at once the more powerful their magic will be.

The land of *Legion of the Damned* is nicely represented by a smart landscape which scrolls smoothly past as you hack-'n'-slash your way through the enemy. As you progress, you are treated to some wonderfully atmospheric and downright spooky backdrops. The title music is great and also appropriately eerie and foreboding. All in all, a great looking, epic sideways SEUCK action/adventure which fans of the genre will appreciate.

Blood, blood, blood, blood... and bits of sick. Something for everyone then?

It's a house of evil, I tells ya. Eeeeeviiiiiil. Things can only go from bad to worse...

DETAILS

Developer:	Anthony Burns
Platform:	Commodore 64
Weblink:	Direct download
Emulator:	WinVICE
Genre:	Shoot-'em-up

RATINGS

Graphics:	86%
Sound:	80%
Gameplay:	82%
Overall:	**84%**

A fine sideways SEUCK in the mould of *Golden Axe*

PHANTOMAS TALES #1

Or *Phantomas Tales #1: Marsport* to give its full title. Matty gives us the lowdown on Phantomas' latest adventure

Like, I suspect, a lot of British Spectrum gamers from back in the day, I'm not that familiar with the series of games starring Phantomas. This small and (ingame at least) torso-less burglar originally appeared in a couple of platform games by Dynamic with his only UK appearances being on the Codemasters budget label. Since then, though, he's appeared in an ever-growing number of unofficial sequels from Spanish indie coders who seem to regard the diminuitive thief as their very own Miner Willy. The latest of these, from the Mojon Twins, promises to be the first in a series.

Despite the name, this seems to have absolutely nothing to do with Gargoyle Games' classic arcade adventure *Marsport*; instead it's a platform game very much in the style of earlier entries in the *Phantomas* series. Our pilfering anti-hero, attracted by rumours of an ancient lost civilisation on Mars and (more specifically) the gold it hoarded, manages to find a communication which reveals the location of this lost civilisation's mines on the red planet. And so, with the intention of making this his last haul (yeah, right), Phantomas makes his way to the planet Mars and the mines which hold the loot he covets.

Gameplay is nigh-on identical to previous *Phantomas* titles. Our little head-with-feet wanders around a flick-screen environment looking for pots of gold and avoiding the various Martian monsters and traps which seem hell-bent on stopping him. Phantomas has a limited amount of energy which the monsters, spikes et al will sap and so as well as avoiding these dangers as best he can he also needs to collect battery power-ups which will restore a portion of his energy, thus making things a little easier. Phantomas has two different types of jump available to use: a high jump which only propels him a small way forward and a long jump which makes him travel far forward but not very high. The player needs to learn which to use in various circumstances to make sure Phantomas can make his way around the environment without toppling into a pit of acid or being driven into wall spikes.

The gaming area itself appears to be completely open from the start and not especially large. It is split into "indoor" and "outdoor" sections on Mars around which the pots of money and batteries (easy to see thanks to intelligent use of colour) are scattered. Although the game is, as I said, not that big, the gold is liberally sprinkled around the rooms and occasionally quite deviously placed meaning that a certain amount of skill will be needed to collect them all. This is made even more difficult by the large number of marauding monsters which inhabit the screens. Even for a skilled player, completely avoiding the monsters is very difficult and so finding the battery packs becomes almost as important as collecting the gold.

Phantomas gets down to business on the ZX Spectrum version

As you might have gathered from my description, this game doesn't really take the *Phantomas* series, let alone platform gaming, in any sort of new direction; it's still the same tiny little burglar jumping around in the same way and collecting objects. Given that I'm not all that familiar with the series, this didn't really bother me and I found this to be an entertaining little platformer. It looks good and the music fits the game well with a nicely "futuristic" sounding in-game tune to accompany the action. I do have a few reservations about this: I don't care much for energy over lives in platform games since I think it encourages programmers to make monsters too hard to avoid, I don't like having two different types of jumps since I think it interferes with the flow of gameplay and, last but not least, the game is actually not all that big. However, for all it's flaws *Phantomas Tales #1* is a fairly good platformer and a welcome first in what I hope will be a gradually improving series. As Arnold Schwarzenegger might say "Get your azz to Marz!"

Trouble arrives as Phantomas heads for the acid pits on the Amstrad CPC version

DETAILS

Developer: Mojon Twins

Platform: Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum

Weblink: Gamecard

Emulator: WinAPE / ZXSpin

RATINGS

Graphics: 79%

Sound: 82%

Gameplay: 72%

Overall: 71%

I found this quite enjoyable and, hey, you probably will too

ANJUEL & NATHAN '09

W*H*B

Just when we thought we had seen all the puzzle games worth playing, along comes Bob Smith's latest to prove us wrong. Duffman enters a world of isometric genius...

So what does *W*H*B* stand for then? Wash Hand Basin? Waste Handling Building? Waste Heat Boiler? World's Happiest Broadcaster? Does it matter? Not a jot.

Admittedly, *W*H*B* bears more than a passing resemblance to *Cuboid* and *Bloxorz*, two online games that have been doing the rounds recently. However, I feel that *W*H*B* more than holds its own when compared against those high-spec games. *W*H*B* does have a similar look and gameplay style to those aforementioned titles, but it combines marvellous graphics, testing puzzles, and fiendishly designed levels to make a stunningly challenging game.

You control a rectangle block in its journey through the many screens with the aim of making it to the exit. This is done by rolling the block around the screen and placing the block onto the exit in an upright position. Now this might sound easier than it actually is, but there are many obstacles and situations to overcome before you get that screen cleared message.

On your travels you will come across switches, which, when touched, will cause new areas of the ground to appear or, if touched again, disappear. Some portals will split your block into two cubes, leaving you the task of reuniting them to get to the exit in one piece.

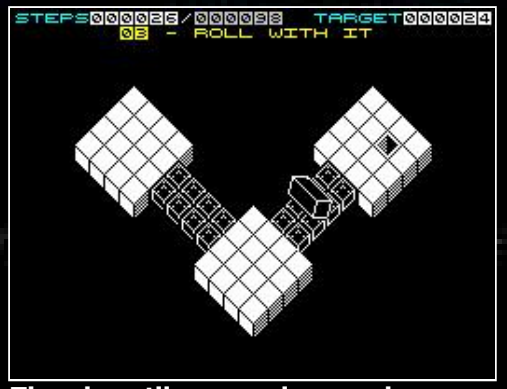
Glass floors are too fragile for your block to roll onto upright, making you roll over it sideways. Then there's fragile flooring that will give way after you have rolled over it, meaning there's no way back, so hopefully you went the right way.

Control of the block is highly recommended on the keyboard as the joystick can be a bit twitchy for such a precise game. However, once you've got to grips with all the finer points of the block's movement, the game becomes a pure joy to play. Your number of steps taken is recorded on-screen and can be compared against the target steps, which seems to be the minimum steps needed to complete the screen. When you complete a screen, there is a welcome passcode that is given out, which can be used to go to the following screen by entering it in on the main menu.

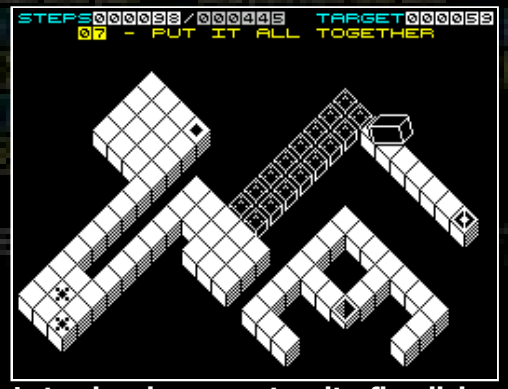
The game is drawn in delightful 3D isometric and the graphics are superb, with brilliantly designed screens. Sure the colours aren't dazzling, but they are as clear as crystal and there's no colour clash problems at all. Sound is limited to the odd soundtrack here and there, which are well done. However, it's the gameplay itself that is most important and the it is fantastic, with a progressively difficulty curve that provides a great challenge.

Addictive, challenging, and professional—do yourself a favour, and download *W*H*B* now.

Things can get confusing when there's two blocks to control



The clear tiles are glass and can only be traversed by rolling the block over sideways



Later levels can get quite fiendish in their design and challenge...

DETAILS

Developer:	Bob Smith
Platform:	ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	ZXSpin
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	87%
Sound:	73%
Gameplay:	91%
Overall:	**89%**

A wonderful polished game that everyone should play

K.O. CRUISER

Duffman would rather spend his time lying on his back in bed than getting up to go to work, so we thought he would be the perfect candidate to try out this game

K.O. Cruiser is coder Devin's first homebrew Atari 2600 game and a fine one it is too. Taking inspiration from the arcade *Punch-Out* game, Devin started this game on the Commodore 64 back in 1986. However, following the release of Nintendo's *Mike Tyson's Punchout*, he decided to ditch the game mid-development. Fortunately, he recently decided to pick up the pieces and make it an Atari 2600 game.

As you may have guessed by now, *K.O. Cruiser* is a take on the classic arcade game *Punch-Out*, and similar to that game, involves boxing the other player's head around the ring. The game was immensely popular and spawned several sequels.

The boxing ring is viewed in 2D as the middle of the screen is zoomed into the back of your see-though wire framed character, but you can move around up, down, left, or right. Then there's your opponent, who faces you and can move around the ring the same as you.

There are six opponents to fight against, each with their own individual look and boxing abilities. At the start of the round, both boxers' energy bars are full and every hit taken decreases it. If the bar is completely gone, then the boxer falls to the canvas.

You have a small selection of moves available, but it's how and when you carry out these moves that is the key to winning the game. Moving into position and pressing fire and left will throw a left punch towards your opponent. Pressing fire and right will throw a right hand punch. You can also block any incoming punches by pressing fire and pulling down on the joystick. This brings your boxer's gloves up to his face. Be warned, though, as the opponent can also do these tactics.

A flying punch is easily blocked by the sneaky opponent

Smack! The oppopent boxer takes a right hook to the chops

Oh, dear. I've taken one hit too many and that's it

Each round last three minutes each and there is a clock at the top of the screen that ticks away. On either side of the clock are the boxers' energy bars. Knock the opponent down and they are given ten seconds to get back up otherwise it's a win to you. However, if you are knocked down you have to quickly press fire to get back on your feet. Eventually, your boxer will be too exhausted to get back up and it's game over. If are knocked down three times then your opponent wins by technical knockout. If you lose, you get the chance to fight the same opponent in the rematch.

The boxer graphics are large, colourful, and well animated, and K.O. Cruiser has a refreshing touch of humorous graphics. The boxing ring itself is quite bland—just the ring, ropes, and plain background—but you hardly notice this, as you are concentrating on the fight. All you get for sound effects are the thud of glove on flesh, but that's really all you need. There are some nice little tunes on the menu screen, at the beginning of each round, and a victory tune.

Strategy plays an important part in the game, as one wrong decision or missed punch may result in you receiving a combination of hits that could knock you out. There's an excellent blend of tactics and arcade action, which makes *K.O. Cruiser* truly fun to play. It's amusing, enthralling, and the range of difficulty is wide enough to keep beginners and old hands equally entertained.

DETAILS

Developer:	Devin
Platform:	Atari 2600
Weblink:	NTSC / PAL direct links
Emulator:	Stella
Genre:	Sports

RATINGS

Graphics:	88%
Sound:	82%
Gameplay:	91%
Overall:	**88%**

An all round excellent and fun boxing game

STAR SABRE 128K

Star Sabre was originally released last year (in 64k) and was considered a classic side-scrolling shoot-'em-up with some great graphics and gameplay. Mark Hall finds out if this 128k update improves on that

Let's not mess around here? It's fair to say that the CPC hasn't really proved itself to be the perfect platform for 2D hardcore scrolling shooters. Yes, there are a few exceptions—*Mr Heli* fits the bill—but by and large, the CPC's bread and butter comes in the way of puzzlers, platformers, and isometric outings. So credit to Paul Kooistra for attempting such a Herculean task, and pulling it off with such class.

This new 128K only version of *Star Sabre* is bigger and better than the original, with even more end of level bosses to blow into millions of tiny pieces. Ships and backgrounds are more detailed, the ground installations are animated, an extra stage has been carefully crafted, and fire power feels that touch meatier.

Star Sabre gets the blood pumping from the off, and plays remarkably well. The 2D backgrounds, music and sound fit perfectly, and everything zips along at 25fps. Enemies, bullets and massive craft litter the screen to the point of intimidation. And you'd be forgiven for thinking *Star Sabre* is a straightforward shooter… behind the scenes awaits quite a complex scoring system, where the player is rewarded by omitting themselves from gaining extra lives, instead choosing to increase their score, whilst focusing more on taking down waves of enemy ships in return for a bonus.

The game is quite hard at first, but with practice you'll eventually hammer through. However, the true meat of the game can be found by going back in, replaying levels to increase scoring, in a bid to hit the lofty heights of the all new ranking system (Hi score chart).

Star Sabre made me feel as though my eyes were being overwhelmed by visuals from a 16-bit system, and despite the on rail mechanics, *Star Sabre* is simply up there in terms of quality, game-play and presentation. Paul's aim was to give *Star Sabre* the burial it deserved. And he's pulled it off. *Star Sabre* is one of the finest shooters ever made for the CPC.

For our interview with Paul Kooistra, the coder behind *Star Sabre*, check out *Retroaction* issue one at our website's back issue page.

It's a house of evil, I tells ya. Eeeeeviiiiiil. Things can only go from bad to worse...

It's a house of evil, I tells ya. Eeeeeviiiiiil. Things can only go from bad to worse...

It's a house of evil, I tells ya. Eeeeeviiiiiil. Things can only go from bad to worse...

DETAILS

Developer:	Paul Kooistra
Platform:	Amstrad CPC 128k
Weblink:	Direct download
Emulator:	WinAPE
Genre:	Shoot-'em-up

RATINGS

Graphics:	85%
Sound:	75%
Gameplay:	90%
Overall:	**83%**

A great game improved upon by this update

CAPTAIN S

A super hero, villains, mutants, nuclear rockets, and sausages. Duffman pulls on his tights, chews on his sausage and heads for Seville

It's an ordinary day for Spanish truck driver Mariano as he carries out a routine sausage delivery in Seville. However, events take a turn for the worse when an experimental nuclear rocket is launched and veers off course, landing on his delivery truck. The resultant impact renders Mariano unconscious, and when he recovers, he feeds his hunger with one of the sausages from his truck. Unbeknown to him at the time, the sausages have been infected by the nuclear impact of the rocket and he soon begins to feel strange. His muscles begin to bulge, he grows a good six inches taller, his ugly face transforms into a pretty square jawed super hero. He is Captain S.

The first thing you will notice about *Captain S*—apart from the brilliant use of comic style images for the intro sequence—is that the game is full of configurable options: language, level password, difficulty, screen detail, scanlines, resolution, screen mode, and so much more can be configured to your heart's content.

The game is a flip-screen platformer and our hero has discovered that the aforementioned nuclear rocket incident was no accident. It was part of an evil plan that Torrebruno orchestrated in order to take over the world. So, like any good super hero, Captain S takes it upon himself to track down the evil Torrebruno and take him out. Trouble is that the trek through Seville is more treacherous than normal: everyday normal residents have mutated into all sorts of monsters and attack Mariano / Captain S on sight.

Mariano can get killed with just one touch from the mutants, but no super hero can be expected to do his job properly if he is vulnerable. Mariano can punch and dodge the enemy, but undoubtedly the best weapon is his ability to transform into Captain S after he has munched into a super sausage. These sausages are conveniently, and not so conveniently, placed randomly around the city. Captain S's energy is shown by a sausage, and each time he is hit, the sausage disappears a bit at a time; if it disappears altogether then he transforms back to Mariano.

Thankfully, you can punch the mutants and aliens. Put yer mits up, pal. Oh, there's a sausage

While playing the game, you will immediately realise that it is not only arcade reflexes that are required, but also a dash of good fortune; there are times you'll feel like you need the timing of the mutants you're so desperately trying to get rid of. Whilst the game is indeed fast and furious, attempting to speed through the screens will inevitably lead you to blunder into a devious trap, of which there are many.

The whole game is held together very well by the graphics, which manage to capture the spirit of the game's plot. Captain S himself is great: he can fly (well, glide, with the use of some skilful cape flapping), throw sausages, become invincible, and more. Each screen boasts a wide variety of excellent graphics, all of which have been designed with a touch of humour. The cartoon sequences preceding play are well implemented and give the impression that the CEZ team have went out of their way to produce a game with genuine style. You cannot fail to chuckle at the expressions and actions of the character, especially if you leave him idle for a few seconds.

No time for bus rides, Captain S, you've got a world to save

Although *Captain S* is a very compulsive game, it is frustratingly difficult, even on the easiest settings. Did I mention that the game is quite difficult? Just emphasising that point.

DETAILS

Developer:	CEZ
Platform:	Windows, Linux
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	N/A
Genre:	Platformer

RATINGS

Graphics:	89%
Sound:	84%
Gameplay:	85%
Overall:	**82%**

A good, tough, old-fashioned platformer

DEATHCHASE

Recently seen on the Amstrad CPC and Windows, Duffman gets back on his bike and hunts down the truth about this Dragon 32 and Tandy CoCo conversion

It seems the Spectrum classic *3D Deathchase* is a favourite game for converting to different platforms. Upon its initial release on the Spectrum, the game received plaudits left, right, and centre, mainly because as it was one of the earliest examples of first person perspective games. There was, of course, the game's main plot, which involved you speeding through enemy infested forests in a similar fashion to the *Star Wars* film *Return of the Jedi*, which was released around the same time. We had the Amstrad CPC version last year, the recent PC remake, and now James McKay—using Richard Wilson's Amstrad CPC code—has developed a version for the Dragon 32 and Tandy CoCo 16K platforms.

In the far future, the world has changed greatly. Following a Great War, North America is now ruled by mighty warlords who fight over forest territory. It's your job, as one of these warlord's mercenaries, to track down and remove any identified intruders in his forests. Taking place over eight stages, you will use your motorcycle to speed after bikers, gaining a $1000 reward for destroying them. Tanks and helicopters will also appear in the horizon and can be destroyed for an extra bonus.

Once you have tracked down an intruder, and have them in your sights, an indicator on your bike's dashboard will flash, meaning that you are close enough to fire off a guided photon bolt. However, this is not as easy as first indicated. The intruders are fast and weave in and out of the trees like true experts. It will take a nerve of steel and a good aim to take these guys out at top speed. Each stage has two intruder bikers, and after removing them, it's on to the next stage.

While the game can be played adequately with the keyboard (cursor keys and space), it's best to use the joystick option as this provides a smoother, and more precise, interface for speeding through the levels. And this is where this game excels: pure fast, exhilarating gameplay.

Having played both the Amstrad CPC and Windows remake in recent months, I wasn't expecting much from this port. How wrong could I be? As you would expect for a 1983 game ported over to the Dragon 32, the graphics are monochromatic and simplistic, but that matters not one jot, because the gameplay more than makes up for any shortcomings in the aesthetics department. Simply put, this is a superb conversion of the source product.

A helicopter, and it's just waiting to be blown up for a juicy bonus

Intruder in sight. Closing in, hold the line, closing, hold it... crash!

Hurrah! An intruder bites the dust as his bike ends up as a fireball of death

DETAILS

Developer:	James McKay
Platform:	Dragon 32, Tandy CC
Weblink:	Website
Emulator:	XRoar
Genre:	Shoot-'em-up

RATINGS

Graphics:	79%
Sound:	64%
Gameplay:	81%
Overall:	**80%**

A good old-fashioned shoot-'em-up

FROGGER

After an amazing 17 year delay, this project, which originally started in 1992, has now been released. Matty tells if it's been worth the wait

Frogger, with its foolhardy frog protagonist, car-filled roads and log-filled rivers, is possibly one of the best known of video games. The original Konami arcade machine, originally appearing in 1981, has been converted (officially and unofficially) to dozens of home computer and game console platfomers and continues to be so to this very day. The Spectrum received its first conversion in 1982 but this latest Spectrum version of the venerable amphibian simulator, again simply taking the name *Frogger*, reaches us in 2009.

Despite only being published this year, this game was apparently originally coded in 1992. The programmer, Dean Hickingbottom, claims to have written it originally for the Amstrad CPC and to have only converted it to the Spectrum "for a laugh". So was this a laugh that was worth it?

Here we go, across the road and then the river. Easy, eh?

Initial impressions are very good with a colourful title screen, a jolly 128K tune and our hero sitting at the bottom of the screen with a big smile on his froggy face to accompany it. On starting the game, the presentation remains good with clear (if rather colourless) in-game graphics and a nicely drawn border accompanied by plenty of suitable 128K sound effects.

Unfortunately, it's once you start to play the game that the problems set in. If you're a fan of the original arcade game (raises arm) then you'll know that it has a very specific feel and the player learns a strategy to get those froggies to their little niches across the river. Whilst most of the home computer clones I've played don't get the gameplay quite right and frequently add their own features, most of the best ones retain the general feel of the original game. This version of *Frogger* doesn't manage to do this and it's here, in this rather crucial matter of recreating something that plays as well as the original game, where it falls down.

Now looking at it, you might say "well, it's got the road, the frogs, the logs... what more does it need?". The problem is the way the gameplay has been implemented. For a start in the original *Frogger* when the player moved the frogs up, down, left or right they would jump roughly their own length each time. This new version doesn't do that, the player moves roughly half the frog's length each time. This feels really off and takes a while to get used to. Another big problem is the logs that flow along the river. In the original game, they tend to appear at "intervals" meaning that if you leap onto a log at one side of the screen and travel slowly to the other you're likely to encounter another log going the other way and can plan a positioning strategy to keep moving forwards. In this game, that doesn't seem to happen, and I frequently hopped onto a log only to have no other logs appear regularly on the river current in front of me meaning my frog was squished at the side of the screen or I was forced to go backwards. Again, veteran *Frogger* players used to their regular logs (the bowel-obsessed can stop giggling at the back!) will find this irritating. Some of the collision detection seemed to be a bit off too (seemingly a result of the way the frog moves as I mentioned above which can leave half his body hanging over the side of a log), most noticeably when much of the time my frog failed to "collect" the bonus frog found on the logs when I jumped onto it! Grr!

Aaargh! Killed by an ambulance. Oh, the irony

It's a shame because what we have here isn't bad programming and certainly not bad presentation but instead bad implementation. A bit of tweaking to make the game feel closer to the rightly well-regarded arcade original and this might well have been the best *Frogger* clone for Sinclair's 8-bit machine. As it stands, it's just a rather mediocre port. But then, as the programmer says, it was only done for a laugh. It's just a shame that this particular laugh is more *Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps* than *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

DETAILS

Developer:	Deanysoft
Platform:	ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	ZXSpin
Genre:	Arcade

RATINGS

Graphics:	81%
Sound:	75%
Gameplay:	51%
Overall:	**52%**

If you're not a fan of the original then this might provide some fun

NANAKO DESCENDS TO HELL

A bikini clad woman, fiendish puzzle adventures, on both Amstrad CPC and Spectrum—what's not to like? Duffman finds out...

It's always the way, isn't it? You leave town for a short time and as soon as your back is turned, some evil no-gooder starts destroying everything. This is the case when Nanako returns home from rescuing her younger sister. The evil Yhop-Uthas had wreaked havoc in her home village, killing people and burning houses. Nanako decided to seek the wisdom of the wise Oracle on what to do. He told Nanako that there is a powerful ancient artefact that will turn any invaders into ash. However, the artefact is separated into four different pieces and scattered around the bowels of hell.

Following the release of *Phantom Tales # 1: Marsport* comes another new Amstrad CPC and Spectrum release from the Mojo Twins. *Nanako Descends to Hell* is essentially a classic style adventure game, where you control Nanako in her search for the four artefact parts, and return home (in this case, the first screen).

The action takes place in an overhead view as you control Nanako around the hell scenario maze-like map. Finding the four artefact pieces isn't a walk in the park though, as the path to many areas are blocked by gateways. This requires the use of sheaths so you can cut your way trough.

By far the greatest hazards in hell, though, are the various demons and monsters that do their best to get in your way. If they touch you then a life is lost. They can be combated by using Holy Water against them, which are randomly scattered around the map. Nanako can only carry four items at the same time, and the collection of an artefact piece takes up a space each, so pick up objects wisely.

The presentation of the game, especially the intro sequence, is great, although the graphics are a mixed bunch: great use of colour in certain areas of the map, while slightly monochromatic elsewhere. Nakano herself is well drawn and, more importantly, quite speedy around the screens. An upbeat soundtrack plays throughout, while there is only the odd sound effect scattered around the game.

At first glance, the game seems fairly ordinary, but as you start getting into it and begin to search the areas, it turns into a challenging adventure that wouldn't look amiss amongst the great 8-bit classics.

Aaargh! Zombies on the Spectrum! Avoid them, unless you like dying. (ZX Spectrum)

One life left and one axe left. Just don't go axe happy... (ZX Spectrum)

There are some nice coloured screens through the game. (Amstrad CPC)

Zombies on the prowl in the Amstrad version. (Amstrad CPC)

DETAILS

Developer: The Mojon Twins

Platform: Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum

Weblink: Gamecard

Emulator: WinAPE / ZXSpin

RATINGS

Graphics: 81%

Sound: 79%

Gameplay: 83%

Overall: 82%

Another fine game to add to the Mojo Twins' catalogue

I NEED SPEED

I need speed. I need gameplay. I need staying power. I need sleep. You will probably get two of these with this racing game. Which ones? Read on and Duffman will tell all

The MSX and Speccy share many hardware specifications, so it's no surprise to see many CEZ games released on both formats. The MSX version came second in the recent MSXDev competition, beating some fine efforts in the process. Coded by Metalbrain (of CEZ fame), the game is based on the FIA's Formula 1 championship. As an F1 racer driver, it's your goal to finish the race ahead of the other racers, natch.

There is a fairly comprehensive list of options available on the main screen... As a championship driver, you can take part in three different championships: easy (circuits 1-4), hard (circuits 5-8), and complete (all circuits). The categories also determine the speed of the game, from "junior" (slow) to "F1" (fast). You can play with keyboard or joystick, select racecourse, and even remove computer-controlled cars from the next race.

It's not advisable to drive around on the grass, but sometimes you can't help it (MSX)

Like Atari's classic arcade racer *Supersprint*, *I Need Speed* is viewed from above. The main difference is that *I Need Speed* scrolls in any direction. The screen is split into two. The left hand side follows your car, while the right hand side stays on the leader. Although, the instructions do state that this can be changed.

When you do eventually finish a race, you can replay the whole thing again (128k version only), which is a nice addition, considering the hardware used. Some tracks are more difficult than others because of tighter bends, underpasses, etc. There are extras available as well, although, these only become available once you win a certain amount of races.

Graphically, this game won't knock your socks off. It has been designed with a basic colour scheme and, as a result, looks a bit drab. However, the graphics are clean and detailed, and the scrolling is handled well enough. Sound is limited to the engine noise and the continuous drone of the music playing away, which can be turned off.

There are a few irritating things about the game, though. The game is quite nippy, even in the "junior" mode, and off-course handling are more than often required as you veer off course. This isn't always to do with poor driving, though, as the controls are somewhat sluggish. You often find yourself turning, but the car doesn't always turn, so you end up pressing left (or right) again, sometimes creating over steer. The game also seems to skip a frame here and there, made more evident when the music jumps at certain points.

However, the main screen viewpoint is probably the biggest let down as it is hard to see ahead in the small area you are given. It also sits right next to the right hand side viewpoint and there is no division or gap separating the two. A minor niggle perhaps, but just one more to add to the list.

I Need Speed is a fun game, and could have been an excellent game—it certainly has all the ingredients—but it is let down by some rushed design and gameplay.

Some nice in-house development advertising in the MSX version

Here's the Spectrum version, and there's really not a lot of difference between it and the MSX one

DETAILS

Developer:	CEZ
Platform:	MSX, ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	BlueMSX / ZXSpin
Genre:	Sport

RATINGS

Graphics:	74%
Sound:	71%
Gameplay:	64%
Overall:	**68%**

An excellent opportunity for an update

GIDDY 3: REASONABLY SPECIAL EDITION

Aliens have invaded so it's down to our egg-shaped hero to save the day. No, not Dizzy, but Giddy... Duffman goes where no other egg has gone

In the beginning there was this cute little platform game from the budget kings of their day, and that game was called *Dizzy*. *Dizzy* was the Oliver Twins' egg-shaped character that bounces around with a stupid grin on his face, getting himself into trouble all the time and generally finding life rather too much to cope with. The game was a huge success and countless sequels followed.

The *Giddy* games actually began back in the 1990s on the Amiga with *Giddy 1* and *2*, with a third game arriving some time later on DOS. Now, we have a remake for Windows, as well as a Nintendo Wii and a AmigaOS 4 version. Essentially, *Giddy 3*—as its prequels were—is essentially a light-hearted take on *Dizzy* and features the same sideways scrolling flip-screen puzzle adventuring gameplay.

The world is under attack by robot stompers from outer space and as Giddy is the hero around these parts, it's his mission to save the day. This involves exploring the landscape, encountering "wibbly" characters, find items, and solve puzzles—all in a days work for a super hero like Giddy. If you walk over a puzzle, a lightbulb will appear at the top of the screen, indicating that you have found an interactive section—usually a puzzle.

Scattered around the landscape are numerous objects, and some of these objects can be used to solve puzzles.

Your energy is shown on the top left area of the screen by stars. Each time you get touched or hit, a star disappears. Thankfully, there are many food items around the game, which you can top up your energy with.

Graphically, the game is very cute and is very comparable to console *Dizzy*'s appearance. The game's soundtrack is also appropriately jolly and uplifting, with some fine spot effects throughout. While there are many puzzles, they are logical and not too frustrating. Fans of *Dizzy*, or indeed, the first two *Giddy* games, will not be disappointed with what's on offer here.

This sea monster looks worse than he is. He's harmless and merely blocks your path

A giant leap for egg-kind as Giddy avoids a stray dog

There's quite a bit of exploring and puzzle solving involved

This creature may look fearsome, but is happy enough when you help it out

DETAILS

Developer:	Peter Gordon, Phil Ruston
Platform:	Windows, Wii, AmigaOS 4
Weblink:	Website
Emulator:	N/A

RATINGS

Graphics:	85%
Sound:	82%
Gameplay:	87%
Overall:	**83%**

A great little game in the same mould as *Dizzy*

DANGER TOWER

Infiltrating secured buildings, disabling security systems, evading robots, all for the purpose of stealing? Tsk. As Duffman discovers, *Grand Theft Auto* has nothing on this game

OK, here's the deal. You're a robber who is after the largest diamond in the world. This particular diamond happens to be located in the "danger tower". Fortunately, you happen to disable the alarm system and have entered the tower through the basement. It's now your mission to travel through the 15 floors and steel the diamond.

Unfortunately, the journey isn't going to be that easy as the holobots are still activated and roam the many floors of the tower. There are four different kinds of robots patrolling the levels in total. These range from Leibot (that move horizontally), Upodobot (that move vertically), Rebounbot (flies all over the place), and Huntbot (that homes in on you).

The good news is that you carry a holo-neutralizer device, but the bad news is that it takes 60 seconds for it to activate. In which time, you need to, as the sub-title on the main screen says, "run or die!" This basically involves dodging the robots by moving around the floor, darting in and out of their way. Luckily, your character is quite a nippy little runner. Once the 60 seconds are up, the holo-neutralizer activates and takes out all the robots. The stairs to the exit then appear and it's off to the next level.

The game is viewed from above with the tower's floor filling the screen. You have five lives at your disposal, but a single hit from a robot and you will lose one of them. The graphics are quite well done, with well-defined sprites throughout. The main character is clearly identifiable as are each of the robots. The music, which has been borrowed (as the coders have stated), is very atmospheric and suits the game. There is the odd sound effect here and there, but it's mainly blips and bops.

Developed by the Danger Team for the MSXdev 2008 competition—it came fourth—*Danger Tower* is a simple yet highly addictive game. Playing the game reminded me of what great classics are meant to be like. The simple, restrained, "less-is-more" mentality has proven to be successful here.

You will spend a lot of your time in this game either running...

...or hiding away from the robots deadly touch...

...because when they touch you, it hurts. It really hurts...

...but it seems all worthwhile when you get to the exit. Hurrah

DETAILS

Developer:	Danger Team
Platform:	MSX
Weblink:	Direct download
Emulator:	BlueMSX
Genre:	Arcade

RATINGS

Graphics:	78%
Sound:	84%
Gameplay:	82%
Overall:	**80%**

A great little game, which should provide plenty of fun

SORT'EM

"Sort 'em" is a phrase that Duffman hears all too often in his life, so we thought he would feel right at home playing this game

Sort 'em was originally a mobile phone game, and it's not hard to see why. The game's simple, but addictive gameplay, is right at home on the minimalist controls of the platform. LuBlu Entertainment is a relatively new development company that specializes in the mobile phone game section. Their first game produced was *Sort 'em*, which has been very successful.

Following their success with the mobile phone version, LuBlu decided to port the game over to the Amstrad CPC and Commodore 64, using Z88DK with CPCRSLIB for CPC development, and CC65 for C64 development. Learning the basics of Assembler for the Z80, the company has managed to finish the Amstrad CPC port, but the C64 version will be delayed.

The game involves sorting coloured balls into their correct tube. Red and blue balls drop from the top of the screen and it's your job to position the V shaped chute mechanism so that when a ball drops it will be diverted to the correct tube.

This all seems pretty easy to begin with, but as the game progresses the number of balls dropping increases, as does their speed. Direct a ball into the wrong chute, however, and the boss-o-meter (indicated by a growing green, amber, red bar) will increase a notch. If the Boss-o-meter reaches the top, then it's game over.

This dry mechanical stuff doesn't sum up the full frantic fun of *Sort 'em*. It's pure panic, poured onto a CPC game. *Sort 'em* is simple in concept and looks good, drawn in big bold colours. It's you against the computer and you don't really stand a chance, but you've still got to give it one more go.

The game starts off pretty easy, but soon turns into a frantic scurry of right/left flips of the chute

That blue ball is heading for the red tube. That's not good

Better flip that chute the other way, it's facing the wrong tube

The boss has flipped his lid and it's game over

DETAILS

Developer:	LuBlu Entertainment
Platform:	Amstrad CPC
Weblink:	Direct download
Emulator:	WinAPE
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	79%
Sound:	64%
Gameplay:	80%
Overall:	**78%**

A fine quick-reflex puzzle game

BANGER MANAGEMENT

A game created in a day? Sausages? Sound like a right turkey, right? Wrong. As Duffman finds out, this game is a riot, in more ways than one

What a mad little puzzle game this is. It's essentially a puzzle platform game involving food and drink. *Banger Management* was developed by Jonathan Cauldwell for the Homebrew "Game in a Day" Challenge at the recent Byte Back convention. Using two ideas pitched for the challenge, *Rabid Potato Kill Frenzy* (the player worked in a chip shop facing waves of mutated potatoes, fish, burgers, and sausages) and *Bonehead Billy* (the player controls a character by placing blocks around the screen), Cauldwell mashed the two ideas together to get *Banger Management*.

Orders are coming in thick and fast and there's a mix up on the cards here...

Orders will start to appear at the customer windows at the left hand side of the screen. Each order will be sausages, drink, or both, and it's your job to makes sure that the food gets to them safely.

The ingredients fall one by one from a trap door at the top of the screen, where they traverse across various platforms and obstacles—*Lemmings* style—and you have to guide them towards the relevant windows by blocking, re-directing, or making them jump. This is achieved by adding arrow blocks onto the various platforms. These arrows can point left (makes the food go left), right (makes the food go right), and up (makes the food jump in the direction they are walking).

The up arrows make the food jump in the direction that they're walking in

Complete an order and it's straight onto the next one. Points are gained by completing each order. This carries on until you've completed all the orders. However, if you take too long getting the order together, the customer will start getting impatient, indicated by a flashing icon at their window. Miss an order, or get it wrong, and the customer complains to the manager. If you get three complaints then you're on a verbal warning, three more and it's a written warning, and a further three and it's goodbye.

Although there is the option to play with either keyboard or joystick, the game isn't really suited to the joystick/keyboard because of the precise speed required. Just like *Lemmings*, the game is ideally suited to a mouse.

Having said that, this must rank as one the best Spectrum releases for a while. Considering that the game was produced in a day, the graphics are great with some well defined sprites and level design. There are so many food items wandering on the screen, the game can get very hectic and quite frustrating. The sound is well catered for, as well, with a jolly soundtrack playing throughout.

Basically, there's enough of a challenge to keep you plugging away for a while, especially as there's a level editor to play about with.

And, well, that says it all, really, doesn't it?

DETAILS

Developer:	Jonathan Cauldwell
Platform:	ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	ZXSpin
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	76%
Sound:	69%
Gameplay:	88%
Overall:	**85%**

Great, especially considering that this was created in a day

DEEP DUNGEON

This may look like a clone of the arcade game *Gauntlet*, but it is in fact a neat little strategy game. Duffman enters deep into the dungeon to find out more

An amulet that has been stolen from your family remains guarded in a deep dungeon by an evil wizard and his dreadful creatures. The amulet bears the royal crest proving your hereditary right to the country's throne. You take it upon yourself to go into the deep dungeon and retrieve it.

Deep Dungeon is the first game from Trilobyte (code: Arturo Ragozini; sound: John Hassink; graphics: Richard Cornelisse) and won the recent MSXdev competition. The game comes in a ROM cartridge format, which means that, as well as working in an emulator, the game can be loaded into a real MSX computer using a Flash cartridge, ROM loader, or ROM converter.

Deep Dungeon is a single player turn-based strategy exploration game. The goal is to find the aforementioned amulet at the bottom of the dungeon. To reach it you need to find the stairways on each floor. However, many monsters and ghouls await within the dungeons many levels.

Game difficulty comes in easy, normal, or hard levels. You can use the keyboard or joystick to move around the dungeon. Monsters will close in on you from the dark corners of the dungeon, but you can attack back by walking directly into them, or simply run away.

The playing area, which is viewed from above, is split into two areas: the dungeon on the left and the status panel down the right hand side. The status panel shows your coins, health, attack power, defence power, and current floor.

The dungeon is revealed one area at a time as you explore it. Any monsters that may lurk in the next room will become visible only when you go through the door. This element of exploration and the unexpected adds a lot to the enjoyment of the game. You might go straight past a critical room without knowing it, or run headlong into a horde of monsters.

The wizard's evil monsters consist of bats, goblins, dragons, and ghosts. There are items that can be found throughout the dungeon. These include coins, as well as boosts to health, attack, and defence.

The presentation is excellent and a lot of work has gone into the game—there is even a PDF manual available. The intro sets up the story well and the colourful graphics add to this. Sound is also well represented by a great tune. Although the game is turn-based, the flow of the game is quickly handled due to the nature of the gameplay. Once you move, the computer-controlled monsters also move straight away, making the game a quick and smooth experience.

The clever design only lets you see areas that you've explored

Sometimes it's best just to scarper rather than fight

The later levels tend to have more hidden nasties around

DETAILS

Developer:	Trilobyte
Platform:	MSX
Weblink:	Download
Emulator:	BlueMSX
Genre:	Strategy

RATINGS

Graphics:	68%
Sound:	70%
Gameplay:	89%
Overall:	**87%**

A great strategy game suited to beginners and veterans

HORACE GOES SKIING

Duffman has been moaning that he wants to go somewhere nice and relax. Well, what better way to do that than to avoid speeding cars, ski down a steep slope, and avoid nasty trees?

Back in the midst of retrogaming (well, it wasn't called retrogaming in those days, mind) there was a hugely popular little gaming icon called Horace. He starred in a game called *Hungry Horace* (which was a kind of *Pacman* clone), where he would go around picking up food from around a park while avoiding guards. The game was quickly followed by *Horace Goes Skiing*, which was a spin-off rather than a true sequel. *H*orace *Goes Skiing* has now received a remake courtesy of Steven Watson, with help on the graphics by sunteam_paul.

As the title suggests, you must take Horace down the ski slopes. However, before Horace can get to the ski-slopes he must first traverse the busy road and avoid the cars, trucks, and bikes. Get hit by a vehicle and it's hospital time, which will cost you £10.00. Don't do this too often as you need £10.00 to purchase the skis once you reach the ski shop on the other side of the road.

If that wasn't bad enough, you now have return back across the busy road with your newly purchased skis. Once you're safely across, you can finally get some skiing done. This involves slaloming down a vertically scrolling ski slope where you guide Horace between flags, avoid trees, rocks, and cross the finish line. And that's about it, basically.

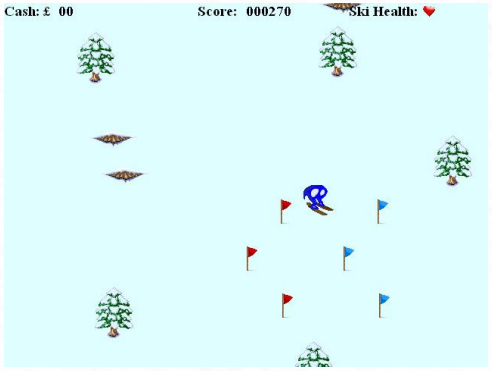
Looking back, it's amazing how amazingly simple some games were, but it's that simplicity that is so charming in games like *Horace Goes Skiing*. With its simplicity, you are left to enjoy the game for what it is: an addictive little title in the same mould as the classic *Frogger*.

While there hasn't been a massive change to the game – the graphics and sound have been given a slight update - the remake still has that classic addictiveness that you can only get with such retro games.

This is still the same old classic game—the only major difference is that instead of staring at the loading screen for around ten minutes, and listening to the high pitched sound of the tape playing, you get to play the game straight away.

Tch. What stupid builder put this ski hut on the other side of a busy road?

If you manage to make it to the slopes, then this is where the fun starts



Just don't ski into any rocks or trees...

DETAILS

Developer:	Steve Watson, Sunteam_Paul
Platform:	Windows
Weblink:	Download
Emulator:	N/A

RATINGS

Graphics:	73%
Sound:	65%
Gameplay:	82%
Overall:	**78%**

A classic game, updated, but not tampered

ETERNAL LIGHT

Wizards, orbs, lanterns? Just another Saturday night for Duffman down at the local takeaway restaurant. Fortunately, he survived that ordeal to tell us about *Eternal Light*

Kerpow! A powerful fireball is unleashed onto the evil blob... and misses

There's a lot of mazes to negotiate and a lot of dead ends—oh, there's a lantern

Eternal Light is (in the authors own words) an Amstrad CPC adventure/action game with a mix of *Gauntlet* and *Zelda* style graphics. The programmer, Morri, started the project six months ago using Basic with the help of the Sprites Alive software package.

The game's plot involves the main wizard character who must collect ten lanterns (receptacles of the "eternal light"), while fending off the evil shadow type baddies using orbs of fire.

Now if you're thinking of a *Gauntlet* or *Zelda* clone hybrid type thing here then stop that right now. While it may resemble said games (kind of) it certainly does not play like them. Part of the reason for this is the pace of the game due to its BASIC programming roots.

Admittedly, Morri acknowledged these failings when he announced the game's release, but that still doesn't excuse the fact that the game moves painfully slow. And once the wizard does finally make it to the end of the screen, the view flips (albeit, very slowly) into the next screen. Yes, it's a flip-screen adventure type thing.

The first thing that hits you is how very yellow the game looks. The backdrop is yellow, the screen is yellow, and everything non-essential is yellow. This does make picking out the characters more easily though.

The screens are part of a larger maze-like map that you have to explore looking for the precious lanterns. Some of them are reached easily, while others involve a bit of puzzle solving. It's not quite as easy as that, though, for there are also random baddies to contend with (who take the form of roving black balls) that move erratically around the screen.

Finally, the blob gets it after firing off twelve fireballs

It takes a patient player to get through these screens as the wizard is quite slow

Fortunately, your wizard is quite proficient in projecting orbs of fire at enemies, killing them on contact. However, should the enemy get within reach and touch you then you will lose one of your initial three hearts. Lose all three and it's game over.

The game's intro screen is, indeed, very promising, which is why perhaps the main game is a disappointment. The graphics are well done, but the problem lies with the gameplay: it just moves far too slow and exploring the maze itself can get quite repetitive.

DETAILS

Developer:	MorriSoft
Platform:	Amstrad CPC
Weblink:	Download
Emulator:	WinAPE
Genre:	Adventure

RATINGS

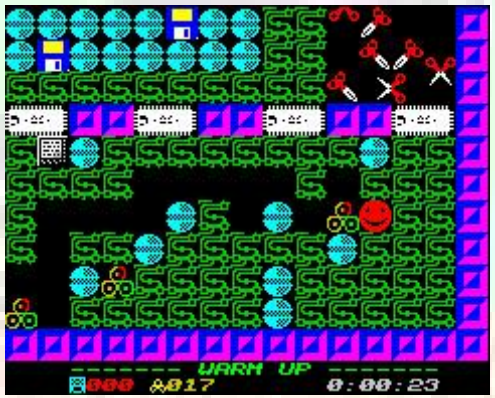
Graphics:	86%
Sound:	62%
Gameplay:	64%
Overall:	**67%**

A good looking game hampered by poor gameplay

SUPAPLEX

A conversion of a clone that appeared on the 16-bit platforms in the 1990s. Understand? Matty explains everything...

Back in the early '90s two Swiss programmers called Michael Stopp and Philip Jespersen decided to write a version of the classic 8-bit game *Boulderdash* that could be played on the new 16-bit machines (which lacked a conversion of the falling-rocks-and-diamonds classic). Taking the basic gameplay of *Boulderdash* they substituted the mines and diamonds for the inside of a computer and "infotrons" and Rockford, the hero of the 8-bit game, for a pacman-like character called Murphy; they also created over 100 levels and fitted the whole game onto a floppy disk. The game, released in 1991 for the Atari ST, Amiga and DOS was called *Supaplex*. It has also spawned remakes including this one for the ZX Spectrum 128K which saw the light of day this year, 18 years after the original was published.



It may look easy, but watch out for the rocks—they really hurt

Now, this game actually comes in two distinct "flavours", one is a disk version designed to be played on the Scorpion (a Russian Spectrum clone) and the other is a tape version which plays on any 128K Spectrum. The disk version saves the player's progress as they play whilst the tape version supposedly saves it out to tape to be loaded in later. To be honest, I've not been able to get the latter system to work and, if emulating, I suggest using the disk version on an emulated Scorpion. Phew, that's that out of the way.

So what about the game itself? Well, *Supaplex* is basically a *Boulderdash* clone, so whether you will like this game rather stands and falls (no pun intended) on whether you like that game. For the uninitiated, *Boulderdash* is a game where the player's character must complete levels by collecting diamonds and escaping through an exit. What makes this tricky are the various rocks left lying around the level. Rockford, the hero of *Boulderdash*, digs through earth as he explores the level and removing the dirt can cause boulders to fall. Generally, the levels are completed by reaching the diamonds and either not allowing the rocks to fall, avoiding them, or letting them fall strategically to either open new routes or kill the marauding nasties which can also stop Rockford getting to his lovely diamonds.

Now, as I said in the introduction, *Supaplex* is basically a clone of *Boulderdash,* but what's probably more noticeable is the learning curve. The first level, whilst a little tricky for an introduction, is quite reasonable but then (after an inexplicable and dull maze level) things get hard very quickly. From level three onwards a great deal of thought tends to be needed before tackling the levels and their puzzles and it took me a while before I managed to get all the infotrons and reach level four. Once you get over the understandable annoyance at being thrown in at the deep-end so early on there's a good, addictive game to discover but it's nonetheless one that could have eased players in a lot more gently.

Presentation-wise, this game is pretty faultless. The excellent, colourful graphics look far more at home on a Spectrum than they do on a 16-bit machine and the programmers have managed an adequate (if slightly garish) recreation of the original's point-n-click title screen with its wealth of options and information. The music is also superb; two tunes are available to accompany gameplay and the first of these (the one selected by the game as default) is one of the best tunes I've heard in a Spectrum game and manages to both evoke the video game music of the early '90s perfectly and suit the game down to a tee. I was astounded, having played the Amiga version of *Supaplex*, that it doesn't seem to appear in the original!

The annoyingly steep learning curve hides a fiendish, addictive game

So, in summary, despite a poorly thought out difficulty curve, this is a terrific conversion of an above-average game and one that seems to suit the Speccy rather better than it does its original 16-bit home. If you don't care for *Boulderdash* clones or if you become frustrated easily this might not be for you, otherwise I recommend it heartily.

DETAILS

Developer:	Triumph Game Labs
Platform:	ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	ZXSpin
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	87%
Sound:	90%
Gameplay:	82%
Overall:	**84%**

Well worth a shot for *Boulderdash* fans

SEUD: SHOOT-EM-UP DESIGNER

Our very own Gnome tries his hand at developing games, thanks this ingenious software, and reports back with some encouraging details...

From The Quill, to GAC, to PAW, to The 3D Construction Kit, to Sensible Software's Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit and even STOS, accessible, cheap, powerful and professional quality game creation utilities were pretty common during the golden era of the home computer. Happily, some things never die as Jonathan Cauldwell has taken it upon himself to keep the tradition going and actually give even more power to the average 8-bit retro loving gamer with game design aspirations. He first released the jaw dropping Platform Game Designer in 2004, then the freeware and ever evolving Arcade Game Designer, and finally the aptly named SEUD.

SEUD, which stands for Shoot-Em-Up-Designer, in particular is almost obviously a tool that lets people with no programming skills whatsoever produce some rather impressive shmups for the ZX Spectrum. Scrolling shmups (or shooters, or shoot-'em-ups, or anything else that manages to get the point across) that look as if a professional programmer had crafted them in pure Z80 machine code. Shmups that can scroll vertically or horizontally, be incredibly varied, or even feature bosses that take up a third of the screen. Shmups you could actually sell; possibly even with the help of SEUD's publishers themselves.

But, how is this sorcery possible (eh, how?), I pretend to hear you ask. Well, I haven't got the faintest idea really. All I know is that SEUD manages to deliver on its promises and that the coding behind it must be of the highest quality. Also that it probably is one of the best things to ever hit the Spectrum, and that had it appeared 20 years earlier it would have sold in the hundreds of thousands.

Importantly, SEUD even lives up to its claims on user friendliness and ease of use. A mere thirty minutes after loading it up, and with only a brief look at the documentation, I managed to come up with something actually resembling a shmup. Granted, it was nothing I'd ever want to share with anyone and most of the graphics looked like, err, generic box shaped thingies, but it was there and it played decently. And no, I'm nothing close to

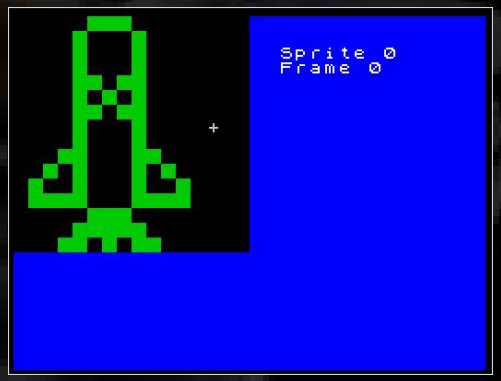
what you'd call a programmer. Never even really tried to be one either. It's just that SEUD's self explanatory menu driven system makes game creation a breeze. If only the manual (of sorts) was a bit richer or if some PDF supplements with more examples, FAQs and illustrations were available… Then again, a developers bible would be too much to ask of such an incredibly well priced offering, wouldn't it?

Now and to give you a vague idea of how the thing works, let me very briefly run through the main parts of SEUD; all of them are accessible via its main menu mind, and jumping from one to another is a breeze. In the utility's core one can find the simple but effective sprites and tiles editors that are used for creating the games key components. Don't expect anything like Photoshop or even Melbourne Draw for that matter, but basic options like flipping, copying and pasting have been included, whereas sprites can also be animated. Then there's the Boss Editor where four sprites can be combined to create a special end of level baddie, the rather obvious and quite versatile Sound Editor, the Attack Patterns section where you get to visually set a series of coordinates for sprites to follow, and finally the Map Editor which lets you combine everything into a playable whole. Oh, and did I mention that all the choices from number of lives, to available bonuses, scoring or whether the game will be a horizontal or vertical scroller are only a menu option away? Well, I just did apparently.

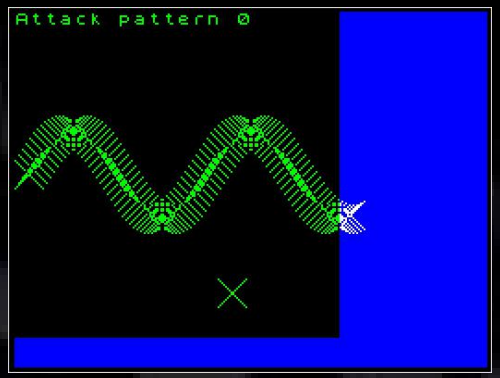
The main process of creating a game—at its simplest of course—involves nothing more than selecting some basic options, drawing a few sprites and tiles, dropping said tiles into the map editor, organizing a couple attack waves, placing them into the map editor too, testing everything, and finally saving the game. To create something really impressive though, you will admittedly need to also come to grips with SEUDs Status Panel bit which lets you move everything –e.g. lives or score counter- around the screen, and most importantly the truly powerful Events Editor. The feature that by itself sets SEUD apart from anything else available on 8-bit machines by providing you with all the flexibility and options you could ask for. It is a limited and extremely simple but versatile scripting language that lets you play around with almost all the games variables and create all sorts of shmup events. Then again, and to add more polish, you could even come up with a loading screen or play around with the freeware Intro Maker (available by Jonathan Cauldwell's site —should you scroll down a bit—here: members.fortunecity.com/jonathan6/egghead/id7.html) or even code and add in your very own bits.

As for the limitations of SEUD, the only thing I really missed was the lack of shooting enemies and consequently the option to create a bullet hell—well, as hellish as the Speccy can allow—shmup. Then again the chance to create scrolling machine code based games in a memory efficient (even in 48k) environment should be more than enough for anyone. What's more, SEUD is versatile enough to spare us, should it actually achieve the success it deserves, tons of samey shooters. Oh, and wouldn't it be fantastic to have SEUD run natively on a PC? Or even have Mr. Cauldwell combine all his game crafting tools in a luxuriant PC edition with all the bells and whistles such an offering would imply?

The main menu. Quite self explanatory



It's supposed to be a missile you know. No, really, it is



Attack patterns made easy via point and click (using a rubbery keyboard)

A lovely, if short, SEUD game created by a certain *Retro Gamer* reviewer

DETAILS

Developer:	Jonathan Cauldwell
Publisher:	Cronosoft
Platform:	ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Web page
Genre:	Utility
Price:	£4.99

RATINGS

Graphics:	N/A
Sound:	N/A
Gameplay:	N/A
Overall:	**92%**

An almost perfect creative tool for the budding Speccy developer

RETRO MAGAZINES

We love retro magazines as much as the games themselves, whether it's to re-live retrogaming nostalgia or discover old publications that you didn't read first time around. Join Neil Reive as he uncovers some of the most popular magazines of ye olde...

It's not only classic games that are fondly remembered by retrogamers, but the magazines as well. During the 1980s, the UK had some great influential titles: *Computer and Video Games*, *Personal Computer Games*, *Mean Machines*, *Amiga Power*, *Edge*, *Zzap!64*, *Crash*, and *Amstrad Action*. The US also had some popular titles such *as Electronic Gaming Monthly*, *GamePro*, *Next Generation*, and *Nintendo Power*. In fact, many countries around the world had their own popular selection of video games magazines.

The amount of times I see people moaning about magazines not being as good as they used to be, and that there are only about three magazines worth buying these days. Well moan no more, because we can relive those magazine golden days again thanks to the tireless efforts of people around the globe, who have all been at the forefront of retro magazine scanning for several years now.

First up is where it all began for me: *Amstrad Action*. Going back a few years now, there was a great little website called **CPC Oxygen** (which has recently resurfaced), that had hosted scans of *Amstrad Action* done by various dedicated scanners. One of those scanners was Mipeha, who was good enough to send me a DVD with the *AA* scans. Wow, this was great, not only could I catch up on the first few issues that I missed, but the later ones as well. While CPC Oxygen has, again, a collection of the *AA* scans, the **CPC Wiki** also has every issue, plus scans of *Amstrad Computer User*, *Amtix*, and *CPC Attack*.

Retromags.com is a website devoted to scanning retro games magazines, where the contributors not only scan the magazines, but edit and enhance them to look just like they came of the production line. I've seen some of the work done on the likes of *Maximum*, *PSM*, *and Official Sega Saturn Magazine* and I am very impressed. The great thing about Retromags is that, rather than simply hosting single page scans, you can download them in one handy archive file. These downloads consist of a single ZIP/RAR file, which can be unzipped to reveal a CBR/CBZ file that can be viewed using a comic book reader program like CDisplay. Not only are there magazines available to download, but also flyers, promotional booklets, videogame related comics, player guides, and strategy books.

The download page is in convenient sub-sections with quick shortcuts to the individual magazines. Because a lot of the Retromags.com contributors are from the US, the majority of the publications are, naturally, US magazines, but there are some from the UK and the rest of the world as well. US magazines available to download include *Atari Age*, *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, *EGM2*, *GamePro*, *Gamers' Republic*, *Mega Play*, *Next Generation*, *Nintendo Power*, *Official Dreamcast Magazine*, *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine*, *PC Games*, *PSM*, *Sega Visions*, and more. UK magazines consist of *Computer Gamer*, *Computer & Video Games*, *Dreamcast Magazine*, *MAXIMUM*, *Mean Machines*, *MEGA*, *Official Dreamcast Magazine*, *Official Sega Saturn Magazine*, *Super Play*, and more. While the rest of the world category consists of *NEO•GEO Freak* (Japan), *Nintendo-Magasinet* (Sweden), *Nintendo Power* (Australia), *Nintendo Power Flash* (Canada), *Sega Force* (Sweden), and *Super Power* (Sweden).

World of Spectrum has loads of Sinclair and Spectrum scans, natch. You can find the three main Speccy

***Amstrad Action* and *MEGA* are both fondly remembered magazines of this author**

Quality magazine scans like *MAXIMUM* and *Electronic Gaming Monthly* can be found at Retromags.com

> *The great thing about Retromags.com is that, rather than simply hosting single page scans, you can download them in one handy archive*

***Amiga Power* and *CU Amiga*, two of the most popular Amiga magazines, can be found at Amiga Magazine Rack**

publications *Crash*, *Sinclair User*, and *Your Sinclair*, as well as several other Sinclair titles. You can also find multi-format magazines here: *Computer and Video Games* (the first 127 issues scanned), *BigK*, *Personal Computer Games*, *The Games Machines*, and much more. Just go easy with the downloads as you're being watched, big brother style – check the website's rules on download limits, etc.

Amiga Magazine Rack is the ultimate resource for Amiga related magazines. A great website with links to scanned pages of just about every magazine that features the Amiga. Here you can find the likes of *Amiga Power*, *CU Amiga*, *The One*, *Zero*, *Amiga Format*, *Amiga Action*, and more. The website itself is also an interesting read full with stats and facts on the magazines, making the Amiga Magazine Rack a must for Amiga fans.

Old Computer Mags, like Retromags.com, is a project to preserve those old computer and video games magazines which we treasure so much. On the ever expanding site are issues of *ACE*, *Amiga Format*, *Amiga Power*, *Amstrad Action*, *Commodore Format*, *CPC Attack*, *TGM*, *Your Sinclair*, *Zzap!64*, *Amiga World*, *Atari Age*, *Commodore Force*, *Power Play*, and *Run*. There's also an impressive amount of Italian publications including *C&VG*, *K*, *PSM*, *Amiga Byte*, *Amiga Magazine*, *Consolemania*, *Gamepower*, *TGM*, *Zeta*, and *Zzap*. The magazines are available to view using an on-line browsing system.

Zzap!64 was arguably the most popular UK games magazines for the Commodore 64 and at the **Def Tribute to Zzap!64**, you can browse through some of the issues, covers, articles, game reviews, interviews, and more. There's also a forum where you can chat about all things *Zzap!*

Commodore Format was launched pretty late in the C64's lifetime (October 1990) and took on the might of reigning C64 magazine king *Zzap!64* and won. Having a group of ex-*Zzap!* writers may have contributed to that fact, though. At the **Commodore Format Library**, you can view a select amount of issue scans. There are also interviews, issue indexes, and covertape ROMS available.

Computer Gaming World stopped publishing in November 2006, but an archivist named Stephane Racle gathered many of the issues into PDF format with indexed text. The **Computer Gaming World Museum** provides visitors with the first 100 issues. The host does mention on the site that he would like all visitors to "be reasonable with [their] magazine downloads" because of record bandwidth levels and he would be happy to provide a DVD—just email him. The issues are also mirrored at http://pdf.textfiles.com/zines/CGW.

Your Sinclair, or *YS*, ran as *Your Spectrum* for a couple of years before being re-launched as *Your Sinclair*. The magazine ran for 93 issues, ending in 1993, outlasting all the other Spectrum magazines that were sold at the time. The **Your Sinclair Rock'n'Roll Years** provides visitors with the chance to relive the nostalgia that came with the magazine. With a complete index of all 93 issues, the website provides html segments from the magazine: reviews, previews, charts, features, and a downloadable ROM of the covertape.

CRASH magazine: The Online Edition is a tribute site to the legendary Spectrum magazine ***CRASH***. Published by Newsfield, the magazine ran from 1984 to 1991 (and from 1991 to 1992 by

***Zzap!64* and *CRASH* can be found at the Def Tribute to Zzap!64 and CRASH Online respectively**

The website itself is also an interesting read full with stats and facts on the magazines, making the Amiga Magazine Rack a must for Amiga fans

Europress). The site provides an archive of material on the 98 issues, as well as the CRASH Software Catalogue, and some new material on an issue 99. Each issue is indexed with the regulars, news, reviews, and more.

Acorn Electron World is, as you might guess, a website devoted to everything Electron. This includes games, emulators, articles, and most importantly—for this feature, at least—magazine scans. Here you will find scans on the likes of *Acorn User*, *Computer Gamer*, *Computer & Video Game*, *Electron User*, *Games Computing*, and more.

During Atari's time under Warner Communications, several publications were produced. These included video games magazines, computer magazines, arcade magazine, and newsletters. **The Atari Museum** hosts all these retro publications: *Atari Age*, *I/O*, *Atari Club*, *Coin Collection*, and *The Atari Connection*. Just click on the Media Section tab and you're away...

The Classic Computer Magazine Archive is a project that provides information from old computer magazines to be made available on the web. Headed by Kevin Savetz, the site hosts scans and info on the likes of *Antic*, *STart*, *Creative Computing*, *Hi-Res*, *Compute!*, and more.

The Mean Machines Archive is the website dedicated to that innovative multi-format console magazine of the early 1990s. The site contains some great content from the magazine itself (indexes with reviews available in PDF format), and some interesting interviews with the staff. There's also stuff on the magazine's EMAP stable-mates like *C&VG* and *MegaTech*.

JoyStik was a 1980s multi-format magazine. A handful of issues from the 1982-1983 era, have been saved on the site in PDF format. Click the icons to download the issues.

Noticing the increasing nostalgia of old computers, a group of users from France got together to create a digital library devoted to old magazines and **Abandonware Magazines** was born. In a similar way to Retromags.com, you will find info on French retro magazines as well as archive downloads. There are just too many magazines to mention, so here's just a selection of the many, many, magazines available: *PC Action*, *Joystick*, *Tilt*, *ST Magazine*, *Atari magazine*, *ST Echos*, *Amiga Dream*, *Amiga Magazine*, *Amstrad Cent Pour Cent*, *Amstar*, *MEGA Force*, and *MSX Magazine*. There are even a couple of retro magazine publications in there: *Retro Game* and *Retro Play*.

If downloading/viewing one page at a time is too much of a hassle, and the magazine you want is not at Retromags.com, then go to the **Zzap! Zzuperstore** where Mort's scans are available on DVDs for a small price. There's the *Zzap!64* and *CRASH* DVDs, as well as *Amtix*!, *C&VG*, *ACE*, *The Games Machines*, *Commodore User*, *Sinclair User*, *Your Commodore*, *Sega Force*, *Mean Machines*, *Mean Machines Sega*, *Nintendo Magazine System*, *Raze*, *Amiga Force*, *N Force*, *Big K*, *Personal Computer Games*, *The One*, *Zero*, *Atari User*, *Dragon User*, and more...

With the hard work of scanners and archivists, the classic magazines of yesteryear are being immortalised online. There are quite literally hundreds of retro magazines archived all over the web and there is bound to be something of interest to any retrogamer who grew up reading them. The legacy of retromags will live on.

***CRASH* articles and reviews can be found at CRASH Magazine: The Online Edition**

The Mean Machines Archive
Home History Staff Profiles Features Magazines Reviews Media Vault Forum Links Contact
The Mean Machines Archive
Random Review
Our Latest Feature
Media Vault
Staff Member Spotlight

***Mean Machines* articles and reviews can be found at the *Mean Machines* Archive**

If viewing one page at a time is too much of a hassle, then go to the **Zzap! Zzuperstore** where Mort's scans are available on DVDs

SCANNERMAN

Having produced the Retro mags feature, we felt it was appropriate to speak to Mort (retro mag scanning guru), who took some time out of his busy schedule to discuss his projects...

Retroaction: Can you please introduce yourself and tell us a little more about what you do?
Mort: Hi, I am Mort, a.k.a. Stephen Stuttard, I collate and scan vintage magazines for various websites.

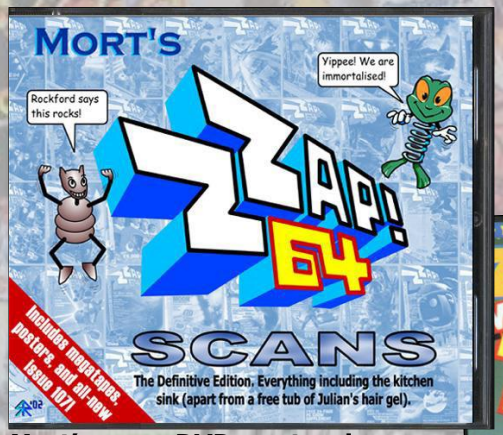
R: What made you decide to start scanning magazines? When did it all start?
M: It all started about 1999 when I first went onto the web and found very little if any of the old magazines were available (mainly front covers) as I needed to check an article out in an old *Zzap* mag! I found a reasonable industrial scanner at a local boot fair and set to work in doing the job myself. I then contacted Iain (on www.zzap64.co.uk) asking if he would like to host them and, as they say, the rest is history.

The CD/DVDs were an idea of Iain's, as we were being hammered on bandwidth by the popularity of the online scans. This gave people a way to help and was an easy way to obtain a complete set and donate.

R: Your scan DVDs are available on the Zzap!64 Zzuperstore. They're not just scans on a DVD, though, they are packaged in a DVD case, with tonnes of bonus material (cover mounted tape ROMs, disks, booklets, pamphlets, media files). How long does it take to compile a complete magazine run of scans with all the bonus material?
M: It very much depends on the size of the mag and how hard they are to track down. Some take as little as four months work if I have the bulk of them to work with, but some can take two years plus (*CU Amiga* is nearing completion and that has been a bit of a large task to collate and scan). Bonus material can be even harder to find, so a lot of very kind contacts on the various sites have lent me parts of their collection, which can save months of searching eBay! Converting the videos is another main task which I pass over to another friend, Darren, who has a decent set-up for converting and saving them to a newer format, which can be a major task in itself.

R: The DVDs for *Commodore Format*, *Your Sinclair*, and *Super Play* were removed from the Zzuperstore at the request of Future Publishing. It must have been disappointing to have all that work pulled down from the site?
M: I can understand the reasoning behind it as the titles are their IPs, but it would have been nice for them to have used the information on their websites, maybe as an online browsable archive. It was a shame as the cover on especially the *Superplay* DVD was one of my best efforts (Will Overton, the original main cover artist, complemented me on it). The mags can be found on the web as I had given the websites—that asked for versions—the mags before the problem arose, so the effort was not wasted and people can still access them.

R: The profits made from the DVDs go into a fund to replace scanners and purchase retro magazines for


MORT'S
Rockford says this rocks!
Yippee! We are immortalised!
ZZAP! 64
SCANS
The Definitive Edition. Everything including the kitchen sink (apart from a free tub of Julian's hair gel).
Includes megatapes, posters, and all new Issue 107!

Mort's scan DVDs not only include the magazine scans, but the covertape ROMs, bonus mags, media files, posters, and more...

The CD/DVDs were an idea of Iain's, as we were being hammered on bandwidth by the popularity of the online scans

scanning. Is there a particular magazine that you were glad to purchase, after a long time searching perhaps?
M: The biggest find must have been Issue 1 of TV Gamer, which cost the equivalent of 40 beers, with the complete set costing about another 150! I am on scanners 18, 19, and 20 now (all A3), so the purchases are important as they keep money coming in to continue to purchase old mags and keep the creaking scanners replaced. Also, people get a good deal of work for their money with content not available on the web due to obscurity or the website not wishing to carry all the cover disks, etc.

R: Which retromag DVD are you most proud of? Can you tell us a little bit about it?
M: Probably the first, *Zzap64!*, which was a five CD set, as DVD was not an option then. I thought when I started it would be impossible to scan all the mags in, but with help from people on the forums, finding more tapes on eBay, and help from Roger Kean from Thalamus (who was the MD of Newsfield), it all was pulled together in about a year. Even the cover was designed by Sir86 of Compunet and C64 loading screen fame.

R: Can anyone help out with the magazine scans? If so, what can they do?
M: Drop me a line on the forums of www.zzap64.co.uk, Amiga magazine rack, or World of Spectrum as I am always looking for new challenges...

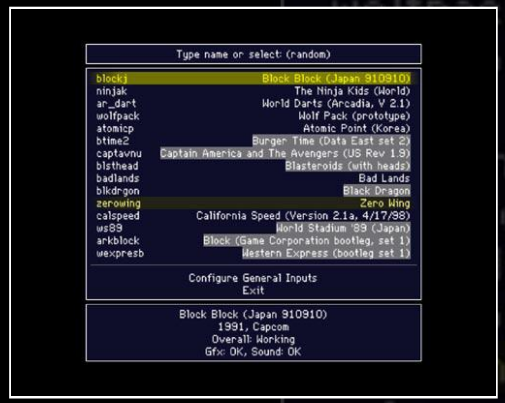
R: Are you planning any other retromag DVDs for the future? Are there any rare magazine issues that are still needed to complete a set?
M: I'm currently working on *CD32 Gamer* (have needed the last two issues for about a year), *Amiga User International*, and *Commodore Computing Internationa*l. So any help with these would be fantastic. Oh, and Vic Computing, the forerunner to *Commodore User*.

R: What is your favourite retro magazine of all time?
M: Would have to be *Crash* as this was the forerunner to all the modern games mags. A friend had picked up his copy of Issue 1 on the way to school, after leafing through it escaped at lunchtime to get a copy, got caught climbing over the gate to get back in but the detention was worth it! Had both the C64 and Spectrum at the time, but *Crash* was written by gamers for gamers which really made you feel part of the community. The only mag I used to stalk at the Newsagents (well, until *Zzap64!* came out).

R: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
M: Just a thank you for all the people over the years who have helped me, which has been invaluable through buying the odd disk or lending/selling me parts of their collection. Big thanks would have to go to Iain, my friend and owner of www.zzap64.co.uk, who started it all. Roger Kean, who has helped with material from Newsfield, and Darren, who proof reads the DVDs and checks for the odd bodge (easy on a 10,000 page DVD).
The quest continues...

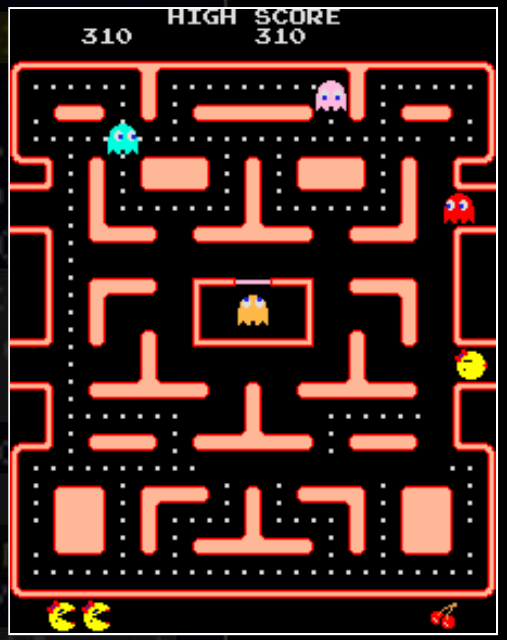
MAME EMULATOR PROFILE

MAME is often referred to as the best arcade emulator and most recognisable name in the emulation world. Duncan Rule examines the history, the software, and some of the better known games

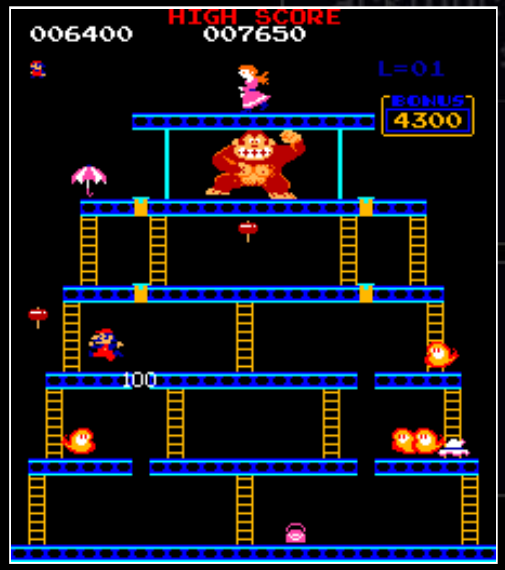

Type name or select: (random)
blockj Block Block (Japan 910910)
ninjak The Ninja Kids (World)
ar_dart World Darts (Arcadia, V 2.1)
wolfpack Wolf Pack (prototype)
atomicp Atomic Point (Korea)
btime2 Burger Time (Data East set 2)
captavnu Captain America and The Avengers (US Rev 1.9)
blsthead Blasteroids (with heads)
badlands Bad Lands
blkdrgon Black Dragon
zerowing Zero Wing
calspeed California Speed (Version 2.1a, 4/17/98)
ws89 World Stadium '89 (Japan)
arkblock Block (Game Corporation bootleg, set 1)
wexpresb Western Express (bootleg set 1)
Configure General Inputs
Exit
Block Block (Japan 910910)
1991, Capcom
Overall: Working
Gfx: OK, Sound: OK

MAME version 0.130 in action

A dimly lit hall punctuated by the luminous glow of cathode ray tubes; the air filled with electronic bleeps and static, adolescent chatter and the metallic jingle of small change. A kid hammers away frantically at the worn buttons of a huge video game cabinet as he attempts to squeeze that last few seconds of play from his one remaining credit. It's a scene that nearly all of us are familiar with in one way or another: the video arcade. While many would argue that the arcade scene has withered away to a rather dire state these days; a mere shell of its former self populated only by over-priced rhythm games and gimmick-ridden monstrosities; the spirit of the arcades of two decades ago is alive and well in a completely different environment: the hard drives of gamers' home computers around the globe.



I refer, of course, to MAME (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator), perhaps the most well-known and popular of all emulators, and the de-facto standard for arcade emulation. The brainchild of Nicola Salmoria, MAME first appeared to the gaming public on February 5th 1997, and has grown steadily since that date to offer support for thousands of games and individual ROM sets. The principal intention of the MAME team has always been to authentically emulate the hardware for as many different arcade systems as possible, and in that they've done a fine job. The key word here is *authentically*, with the actual playing of the games considered merely "a nice side effect".



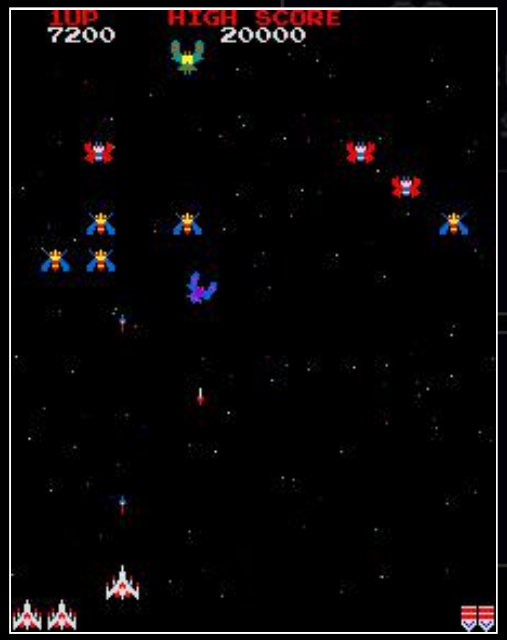
The intention of the MAME team has always been to authentically emulate the hardware for as many different arcade systems as possible, and in that they've done a fine job

MAME does not seek to improve and build upon the playing of these games, but rather simulate them exactly as the real thing would play, right down to the smallest detail of registers and instructions, along with any unintentional bugs or quirks the original hardware may have. This is certainly no mean feat. Take, for instance, a typical NES emulator. Here, the programmer seeks to replicate the hardware of the original NES within a software environment; a relatively finite task. All NES consoles

With MAME, gamers are finally able to enjoy these arcade titles exactly as they experienced them at the local video arcade

were born equal, containing the same processors, memory chips and other components as each other. Once you've successfully modelled this hardware, the process is pretty much complete (of course, this is a vast over-simplification of the task, but the concept remains the same). Now consider creating an "arcade" emulator. There are thousands of different hardware architectures out there for all manner of different arcade PCBs. Many games used a one-off hardware configuration and control scheme built exclusively for that game. Attempting to emulate all of these suddenly becomes a much more daunting prospect than a humble 8-bit home system.

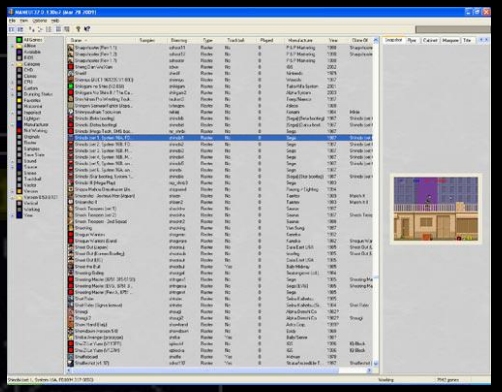
The MAME team have faired remarkably well however, and the



project is very impressive in both its scale and usability. While a lot more modern titles are unplayable or unsupported (particularly those games that were fully 3D), MAME will play thousands of classic arcade titles perfectly well as far as the majority of gamers are concerned. Consoles during the 1980s and '90s were littered with their own ports of various arcade titles, but these almost always fell short of the mark. The home systems of the time just didn't have the power to accurately recreate titles as they were in their original arcade incarnations (unless you were lucky enough to own a Neo Geo AES, of course). With MAME, gamers are

finally able to enjoy these arcade titles *exactly* as they experienced them at the local video arcade (although I won't get into the legalities of doing so in this article; this is about gaming, not law).

The basic operation of MAME is much the same as the majority of other video game emulators out there, and the original game "ROMs" are required in order to play anything. Unlike most home console emulators however, MAME ROMs exist as a series of separate files, each representing the contents of one of the original PCB's ROM chips, and are stored either in their own folder or zip file. MAME itself was initially a command-line only program, and as such was not particularly user friendly to those



MAMEUI32, one of the GUI versions of MAME

inexperienced with such interfaces. Recently, however, a basic GUI has been implemented into vanilla MAME, although the majority of fine tuning and setup must be still done via the command line or through the editing of configurations files. As with DOSBox (discussed last issue), there are also a multitude of graphical front-ends available from various third parties that provide a much more user-friendly Windows-esque interface for you to tweak your setup from should you so wish. Those without PCs needn't worry either, as variants of MAME are also available for a number of other platforms that allow anyone with a relatively powerful home computer to sample its virtual coin-munching delights.

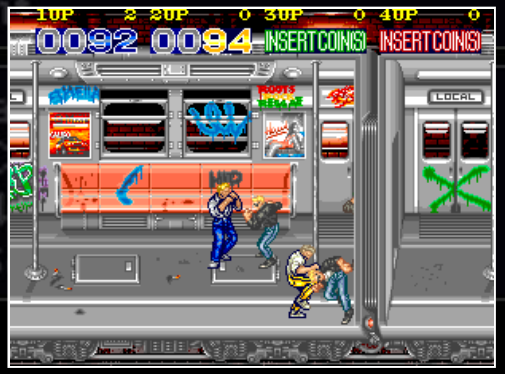
Unlike a lot of other emulators, and due to the bespoke nature of many old arcade machines, MAME allows users to create custom control and graphic configurations for each game separately, and tweaks can be made on-the-fly through MAME's options menus while the game is running. Keys or joystick buttons can be assigned for any input the original hardware had, including things such

MAME is, quite simply, the best arcade emulator in existence, and a true testament to what can be accomplished with dedication, commitment and a passion

as the all-important coin-insert trigger. The actual setup and service modes of games are also accessible via a single keypress to enable functions such as free play, and also provide an interesting insight into the kinds of things unscrupulous arcade owners were enabling or disabling to ratchet up the difficulty and ensure your hard earned money was spent as quickly as possible.

Anyway, let's get on to the games. The majority of titles I've tested with MAME have, on the whole, played exceptionally well. Despite the "accuracy is law" philosophy of the dev team, you won't find a lot of half-finished features for the sake of perfect processor timings here, and even with the rather steep system requirements of MAME (in no small part due to this quest for accuracy), a typical modern PC will almost certainly be able to run a huge variety of games. Even my lowly ASUS netbook has managed to play most titles I've thrown at it. The supported games reach right back to the dawn of the arcades, and you can expect to be able to play anything from *Space Invaders* right up to some of the more advanced 2D titles of the late 1990s and early 2000s such as the later *Metal Slug* games that appeared on SNK's Neo Geo MVS hardware. In short, it's a retro gamer's dream.

ROM sets are organised into "parent" and "clone" groups, with the parent ROM set being that which the MAME team have determined to be the "original" version (usually the most recent World or U.S. variant of the game). These parent ROM sets contain all the files necessary to get the game running, while clone sets will only include those files which differ from the parent set. Many of these clones don't really offer much of a difference from the parent, while some will change gameplay elements drastically (such as some of the well-known *Street Fighter II* hacks that were prevalent during the '90s).



Controls can be assigned to pretty much anything you can plug into your PC, so you can choose to use gamepads or arcade-style joystick controllers if you prefer them. Many arcade enthusiasts have taken things to the next level and built themselves a MAME cabinet. Some of these begin life as an old stripped out arcade machine, while some choose to build from scratch or purchase a kit from one of several places offering them online. A dedicated MAME PC is then inserted into the machine, which is outfitted with proper displays and control panels to provide a truly authentic arcade experience. The cabinets range from the traditional stand-up type to the "cocktail" table-type, and MAME can be configured to provide the correct video-out for various screen configurations. For those of you with the space, time and money, it's certainly a rewarding project to undertake; your own arcade cabinet that can be loaded with potentially hundreds of unique games, all accessible at the press of a button.

MAME is, quite simply, the best arcade emulator in existence, and a true testament to what can be accomplished with dedication, commitment and a passion for all things retro. The emulator is showing no signs of dying out, with smaller incremental updates appearing frequently, and major releases happening on roughly a monthly basis. The MAME team's accomplishments thus far have been amazing, and things for the world's greatest emulator can only get better with time.

For more information, and to download MAME for free, visit the official homepage at http://mamedev.org/.

RETRO RESPECT

BUCK ROGERS COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY

A Science Fiction, tactical Role Playing Game based on *Buck Rogers*? Neil Reive explains why its initial strategy-meets-cheesy-franchise description shouldn't put retro gamers off a great game

DETAILS

Developer:	Strategic Simulations, Inc
Publisher:	Strategic Simulations, Inc
Released:	1990
Platform:	DOS, Amiga, C64, Mega Drive/Genesis
Genre:	Tactical RPG

SUDDENLY, SHIPS SCREAM IN LOW FROM THE NORTH. PANDEMONIUM REIGNS AS THE FIGHTERS DROP THEIR DEADLY CARGO! SHIPS AND CONTROL TOWERS COLLAPSE IN BALLS OF CRIMSON FLAME! PEOPLE PANIC AND SCATTER.

Straight from the off, the dirty stuff hits the fan and you're recruited to save the day... (Amiga)

NAME AC HP
GOLDBERG 4 36
HANSEN 3 36
JONLAN 5 61
REDFAX 4 10
ZEPHYR 2 1
CHOMSKI 6 0
2,8 S 01:03
TERRINES HAVE SPOTTED YOU AND ARE MOVING IN FOR THE KILL. NEO FORCES COME TO YOUR AID.
PRESS BUTTON OR ENTER TO CONTINUE

The first person perspective certainly helps to heighten the tension during exploration (DOS)

NAME AC HP
BRITNOST 6 19
DUNC 6 16
TRICKY 4 11
DUFFMAN 6 16
GNOME 6 22
AREIVE 3 17
AFTER HEARING OF THE BRAVERY OF BUCK ROGERS AND THE NEW EARTH ORGANIZATION, YOU HAVE DECIDED TO JOIN NEO AND FIGHT THE RAM MENACE THAT IS TERRORIZING THE SYSTEM.
PRESS BUTTON OR RETURN TO CONTINUE

Just like a true hero, you offer your services to fight against the invaders (C64)

It's off to battle we go... Make good use of your turn based options (Amiga)

It's funny how you stumble across certain games that you would never think of buying yourself, or indeed, even playing. *Buck Rogers: Countdown to Doomsday* (known as *BR: CtD* from now one) was one of those games for me. I borrowed it from a friend who didn't like it at all and preferred the fantastic tactical RPG *Shining Force*. I played it, loved it, and went out to purchase a copy for myself. Instead of the usual fantasy plot found in many Role Playing Games, *BR: CtD* features a sci-fi story, which twisted, turned and surprised you as much as any other RPG could.

The name Buck Rogers may conjure memories of the television series from NBC (1979-1981), but *BR: CtD* is actually based on the Buck Rogers XXVc setting that was created by TSR inc. in 1988, and has featured in such media as books, novels, and board games. The back-story is well detailed in the game's manual, but the main story begins in the intro scenes. The year is 2456 and Earth is war torn after centuries of battles. NEO (New Earth Organisation), with the help of a recently revived Buck Rogers, have just won a victorious battle against RAM (Russo-American Mercantile: the previous ruthless rulers of Earth) and take control of Earth. A new hope comes with this new dawn as new recruits join NEO and this is where you, the player, come in.

The manual may be a little off putting with its in-depth detail, but you rarely need to flip through it, even if you're a complete beginner. The player starts the game by building up their party of six members from a selection of different classes (warrior, jock, rogue, and medic) and race (Martians, Tinkers, Desert Runner). Each member has their own unique abilities with such elements as strength, dexterity, and constitution. A balanced mix of race and skills will ensure you succeed in the game. For instance, a medic is invaluable if you intend on healing your team, while a rogue is useful for computer hacking and key locks.

The party is briefed and given a shuttle to use, but then all hell breaks loose as RAM start attacking the spaceport. People flee in all directions and the enemy is everywhere. The party discover that - for the first mission - they must reactivate the spaceport's defence fortification. It is during this scuffle that the first encounter of the RAM's Terrines takes place: bio-engineered humanoids built for fighting.

Exploration during missions is viewed in the classic first perspective, but once the enemy is in sight, the view switches to battle mode: the screen zooms into an expanded version of the section that you are in, with the odd plant, furniture, equipment or other obstacles. Combat is turn-based—which I always prefer as opposed to the clumsiness of real-time—and each member of the party take their turn to use the allocated APs (Action Points) to carry out commands like move, attack, or heal. As with all great RPGs, strategy can play a major part in battles, as attacks from the back and side are more effective than attacks from the front. The crosshair can be moved over the enemy to view their rank, health, and chance of hitting them, allowing you to attack the easiest and weakest unit. While the combat can be played out automatically using the "quick combat" option, it is recommended to play out the battles manually as you have better control on what happens.

Careful selection of weapons is also needed as each weapon has a different effect on different enemy. For example, shooting a Terrine with a laser gun is not as effective as shooting it with a rocket launcher. Once a battle is won, the party receives credits, experience points and the option of looting the bodies for weapons and equipment. The initial battles are relatively simple, but get progressively more difficult throughout the game.

The action hots up as they take the battles into space (Mega Drive)

As with all great RPGs, strategy can play a major part in battles, as attacks from the back and side are more effective than attacks from the front.

However, get past [the rather drab graphics] and you will find that this is a well written, involving and rewarding game

When you enter the spaceship, the view screen changes to the Solar System View. Here you can see the inner plants: Earth, Mars, Venus, Mercury, and the surrounding asteroids. In between travelling to destinations, the player's ship will sometimes come under attack by various enemy ships. The view will change to the spaceship combat viewpoint, which is seen from the ship's view screen. Space ship combat is similar to the ground battles as each side take turns to fire the ship's weapons, fly away, or even board them (if the ship is disabled).

You will gain credits throughout the game, to which you can buy weapons and supplies from the various spaceport shops. These include a standard laser gun and Smart Suit to Heat Guns, needle guns, shielded Mercurian armour and much more. Spreading the weapons around the party should get the best out of them and any spare loot can be sold for extra credits. As After gaining all those experience points, you can train your troops in new skills or better existing ones such as stealth, hacking, weapons.

The missions are varied and will keep the most experienced RPG fan busy for some time. The early missions see you rescue the NEO base from enemy troops, while later missions see you rescuing prisoners on remote asteroids, assassinating rogue scientists, and saving innocent civilians. Even some familiar faces make an appearance to help out with any particular difficult situations.

The C64 version is very impressive for an 8-bit computer and the graphics are hardly compromised at all. The game comes on three double-sided C64 disks, but there is very little swapping needed while playing. The Mega Drive version plays the same as the other 16-bit versions, but with one difference: the exploring view is not first perspective, but a zoomed out view similar to the battle viewpoint. The options are also cut down for the console version: races, skills, equipment have all been simplified. However, the sound on the 16-bit console is the most impressive of all the versions with some atmospheric soundtracks and sound effects.

A BODY RISES FROM THE FLOOR, SEEMINGLY TRANSLUCENT IN THE RED GLOW. AS IT FLAILS AROUND, GLOWING GLOBULES SPIRAL AWAY FROM THE FIGURE'S ARM, DISAPPEARING AS THEY REACH THE WALL.
PRESS BUTTON OR ENTER TO CONTINUE

The game is full of nice atmospheric cut scenes (DOS)

Considering it's an 8-bit, the C64 does a respectable job

The Mega Drive conversion uses an isometric viewpoint as opposed to the computer first person view

At first glance, *BR: CtD* doesn't exactly grab you, the main graphics can be drab and disappointing. However, get past this minor quibble and you will find that this is a well written, involving and rewarding game.

Despite receiving glowing reviews in the gaming magazines, *BR: CtD* wasn't exactly flying off the shelves and was soon forgotten in favour of console RPGs like *Zelda*, *Final Fantasy*, *Shining Force*, and *Phantasy Star* games. Perhaps the combination of sci-fi, RPG, and a connection with an old cheesy TV series like *Buck Rogers* put many people off. Whatever the reasons, SSI nevertheless surpassed the achievements of their own *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* games with one of the best RPGs of its time.

PART TWO: DARK FORCES RISING

After the popularity of The "Computer Warrior" comic strip, it returned with a new plot, new characters, new games, a new writer, a new artist, and, arguably, its most creative period in its entire run. Neil Reive follows the story as it enters its second phase

When the first story arc of "Computer Warrior" came to an end, Bobby Patterson had successfully completed the computer game challenges—by playing them for real within the computer's realm—and had rescued his best friend, Martin French, from the Nightmare Zone. Despite the story being resolved neatly with that happy ending, this wasn't the end of "Computer Warrior". The innovative premise of the comic strip (for the time) had proved so popular with readers that the publishers brought it back. So, following a brief hiatus, "Computer Warrior" was back within the pages of the weekly *Eagle* comic on 27th December 1986.

Although the artist changed a few times during the second story arc (from R. Smith, to M. Western, and then to M. Dorey), they were done chronologically rather than the haphazardness back and forth approach of the first story arc. This meant that the look of the stories remained more consistent than previously.

So what new plot threads did the writers come up with? It's a well known fact that great computer and video games are enhanced even more with the ability to play with one or more friends. This is one of the main ideas D. Spence introduced into the strip, which was carried on by the next writer B. Waddle. Along the way, Bobby would make friends and enemies of fellow Computer Warriors, and there was more emphasis placed on the mysterious Computer Warlord, the dark forces, and the computer realm. The writers also kick-started the return with one of the most popular multi-player arcade games at the time: *Gauntlet*. The fact that U.S. Gold published the home computer conversions of the games featured the second story arc couldn't go unnoticed. It was a real coup for U.S. Gold to virtually

YOU HAVE BEEN SUMMONED TO DEAL WITH A GRAVE CRISIS. DARK FORCES HAVE RISEN WITHIN THE NIGHTMARE ZONE— FORCES WHICH SEEK TO USE THE REAL-LIFE FACILITY TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE—
—YOUR WORLD!

BOBBY REAPPEARED WITHIN THE FIRST MAZE...
HEY-THERE'S FOUR OF US!
FOUR CAN PLAY THIS GAME. I'M DRESSED AS QUESTOR - BEV IS THYRA - GUMMER IS MERLIN AND YOU'VE GOT THE ROLE OF THOR!

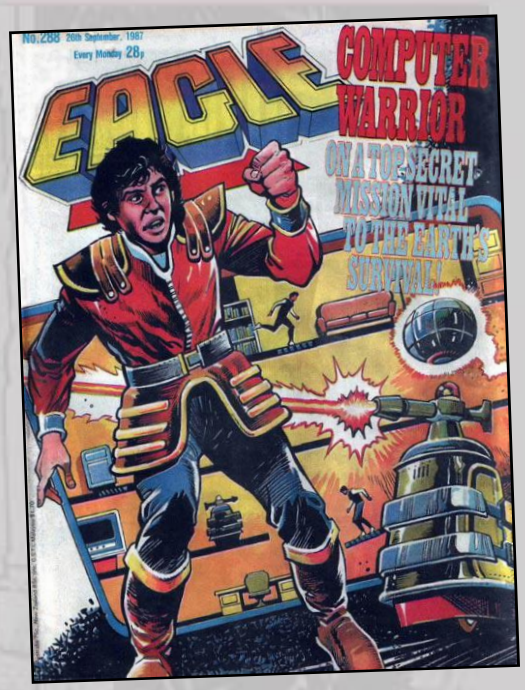
monopolise the games featured (they also published Epyx games in Europe and dealt with Go!).

As the second story arc of "Computer Warrior" begins, everything is fine: Bobby is playing football with his best friend Martin, and life has returned back to normal. However, as Bobby is getting ready for bed, the Warlord appears to tell him that he is needed in the computer's realm. Although Bobby refuses to go back, the Warlord says that it is his duty since he accepted Computer Warrior status, and they dissemble into the computer flux.

As Bobby re-appears in the computer realm, he joins the other 16 Computer Warriors and the Warlord briefs them on the situation. There is increasing unrest within the Nightmare Zone as Dark Forces threaten to escape their confines and invade the real world. The Warlord tells them that he must find a Supreme Warrior who can help fight against the increasing threat of the Dark Forces. To this end, all 17 Computer Warriors will take part in a series of tests to find the best, while the 16 losers will be sent to the Nightmare Zone. Despite grumbling from many, the Warlord tells them to return home and practice for their first test. As Bobby returns to his bedroom he has other ideas and he smashes his computer so the Warlord can't pull him into it.

However, the Warlord still manages to appear in the real world to summon Bobby for the first test. Putting up a struggle, Bobby is taken into the Computer's realm and briefed on the first game. The Warlord shows his disappointment in Bobby's attitude and says that all he did was make sure he went into the first test with no practice—his first game may well be his last. The dungeons and mazes of *Gauntlet* lay ahead of the warriors as the Warlord briefs them on the task in hand. For the next hour, they will be set loose within the confines of the dungeon to battle against demons, grunts, ghosts, lobbers, and death itself.

As Bobby appears in the *Gauntlet* dungeons, he sees that he is teamed up with three other warriors. Floyd, one of the warriors, explains that four people can play the game. Floyd is Questor, Bev is Thyra, Gummer is Merlin, and Bobby is Thor. Having not played the



game at all, Bobby struggles throughout, losing health points at every turn. The situation is not helped by Gummer, who is rapidly showing his sneaky side as he takes any food that Bobby badly needs and tricks him out of any treasure. Despite Bev and Floyd helping out the best they can, and Gummer refusing to use his magic, Bobby loses all his health when Death closes in on him.

When Bobby re-appears back within the Warlord's keep, he is told that he is a second early failure and must wait for the others to arrive. One by one, the others re-appear and the Warlord informs them of the results. He tells them that most of them acquitted themselves well, although, Gummer achieved twice the points score of his nearest rival. Two of them, however, fell short of the standards expected of Computer Warriors. Just as the first Warrior kneels down and begs for mercy, the Warlord sends him to the

DARK FORCES RISING

The games:

Gauntlet (1985)
Developer: Atari Games
Publisher: Atari Games, U.S. Gold
Platforms: Arcade (also ported to various home platforms)

Gauntlet is arguably the most famous and popular multi-player games from the mid-eighties, so this was a great choice to kick off the new story arc. With up to four players (Thor the Warrior, Merlin the Wizard, Thyra the Valkyrie, or Questor the Elf), you hack-'n'-slash your way through endless dungeons, fighting the likes of grunts, demons, ghosts, and the dread death himself.

Gauntlet made a huge impact in gaming culture and the game was ported to virtually every machine made. Various sequels and remakes also followed with mixed responses. The voice samples of the original arcade are remembered fondly as the announcer spouted such classics as "Warrior needs food badly," "Elf shot the potion," and "Remember, don't shoot food!"

Express Raider (1986)
Developer: Data East
Publisher: U.S. Gold
Platforms: Arcade (also ported to: Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum)

A side-scrolling action game where you, playing as a robber in the Wild West, have to be the greatest train robber. From the wild plains to moving trains, you have to punch, kick, and shoot your way through the levels.

EAGLE
Join the boy who plays software games for real!
THE COMPUTER WARLORD HAD TO FIND A SUPREME CHAMPION TO FIGHT THE DARK FORCES OF THE NIGHTMARE ZONE!
THIS ISSUE-
ACE of ACES

IT'S A MESSAGE FROM THE WARLORD!
OFFER ONLY £189
HOW THE HECK CAN HE DO THAT?
ATTENTION COMPUTER WARRIOR PATTERSON !!! PLAY EXPRESS RAIDER !!!
THE COIN-OP SENSATION FROM DATA EAST

Nightmare Zone. Bobby survives to play another game, though.

The next game test is *Express Raider*, and as Bobby hasn't got any money to purchase the game, he gets in some practice with the arcade version. Barely getting in an hour's practice on the game, he is pulled back into the Warlord's keep. As an "express raider", Bobby needs to chase an express train, negotiate along the carriages, and take the treasure at the front of the train. However, Bobby soon discovers that playing the game in the computer's real-life realm is harder than the virtual game. He is shot, knifed, shot again, and again, and thrown off the train before he finally succeeds in winning the game.

As Bobby appears in the Warlord's sanctum, he is told that his performance spared him the terrors of the Nightmare Zone. Howard Gummer is quick to tell Bobby that he was first to finish the game. Bev Somers soon appears, but they soon grow worried about Flloyd, who didn't get any practice of the game beforehand. One by one, more warriors appear before Floyd finally arrives second last. The warrior to come last is, as promised, sent to the Nightmare Zone by the Warlord.

Back in reality, Bobby gets some of his savings together to purchase a new computer—he must get in practice if he is to survive this ordeal. Bobby sets the computer up and requests information on the next test, but the Warlord appears and brings him straight into the computer's realm. The Warlord purposely withheld the name of the next test from all Computer Warriors so that they all started with equal knowledge of the game. The game is *World Games* and for the purposes of the events, they start with equal power, skill, and stamina. Bobby is, again, placed within the group of Bev, Floyd, and Gummer as they travel to their first event.

Bobby quickly realises the secret of succeeding in the test, which is to conserve your stamina. So while Bobby, Floyd, and Bev relax in between events, Gummer trains hard. Bobby wins the next two events (skate jumping and diving) while Gummer trails behind. Floyd wins the skiing, Bev overcomes Floyd to succeed in the logrolling. All the while, Gummer trails behind in last place in all events. Having come in last, Gummer must take part in the sudden-death play off with the other losers. As Gummer fades away to play the sudden death, he accuses the others of ganging up on him, and that they have made an enemy of him.

Following a scuffle with the Dark Forces, the Warlord chooses the game for the next test: *Ace of Aces*. The Computer Warriors are summoned, where Bobby, Bev, Floyd, and Gummer meet up again. The Warlord explains that as a fighter pilot in World War II, they must survive long enough to get back home and any that "are shot down or do not complete their missions will be consigned to the Nightmare Zone." Bobby survives the dogfights and scrapes long enough to limp home with a damaged engine. Bobby follows Bev in to land and they end up fifth and fourth places respectively. Once again, Gummer informs them that he was first while they wait for Floyd to arrive.

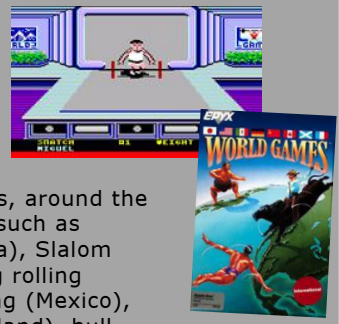
DARK FORCES RISING

World Games (1986)

Developer: Choice Software Ltd

Publisher: Epyx

Platforms: Commodore 64, MSX, Amiga, Atari ST, Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum, Apple IIGS, SEGA Master System, DOS



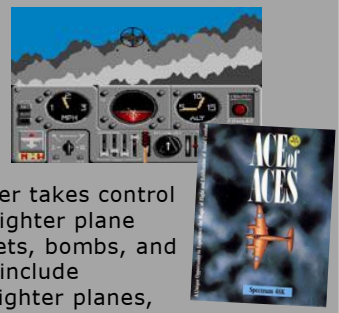
Part of the Epyx sports series which previously saw the likes of Summer Games and Winter Games. *World Games* is staged, as the title suggests, around the world, with events such as weightlifting (Russia), Slalom skiing (France), Log rolling (Canada), cliff diving (Mexico), caber tossing (Scotland), bull riding (United States), Barrel jumping (Germany), sumo wrestling (Japan).

Ace of Aces (1986)

Developer: Artech Digital Entertainment

Publisher: Accolade, U.S. Gold

Platforms: Amstrad CPC, Atari 8-bit, Atari 7800, Commodore 64, MSX, DOS, Sega Master System, ZX Spectrum



Ace of Aces is a flight simulator computer game developed by Artech Digital Entertainment in 1986. It is World War II and the player takes control of a RAF Mosquito fighter plane equipped with rockets, bombs, and a cannon. Missions include destroying enemy fighter planes, bombers, V-1 flying bombs, U-boats, and trains.

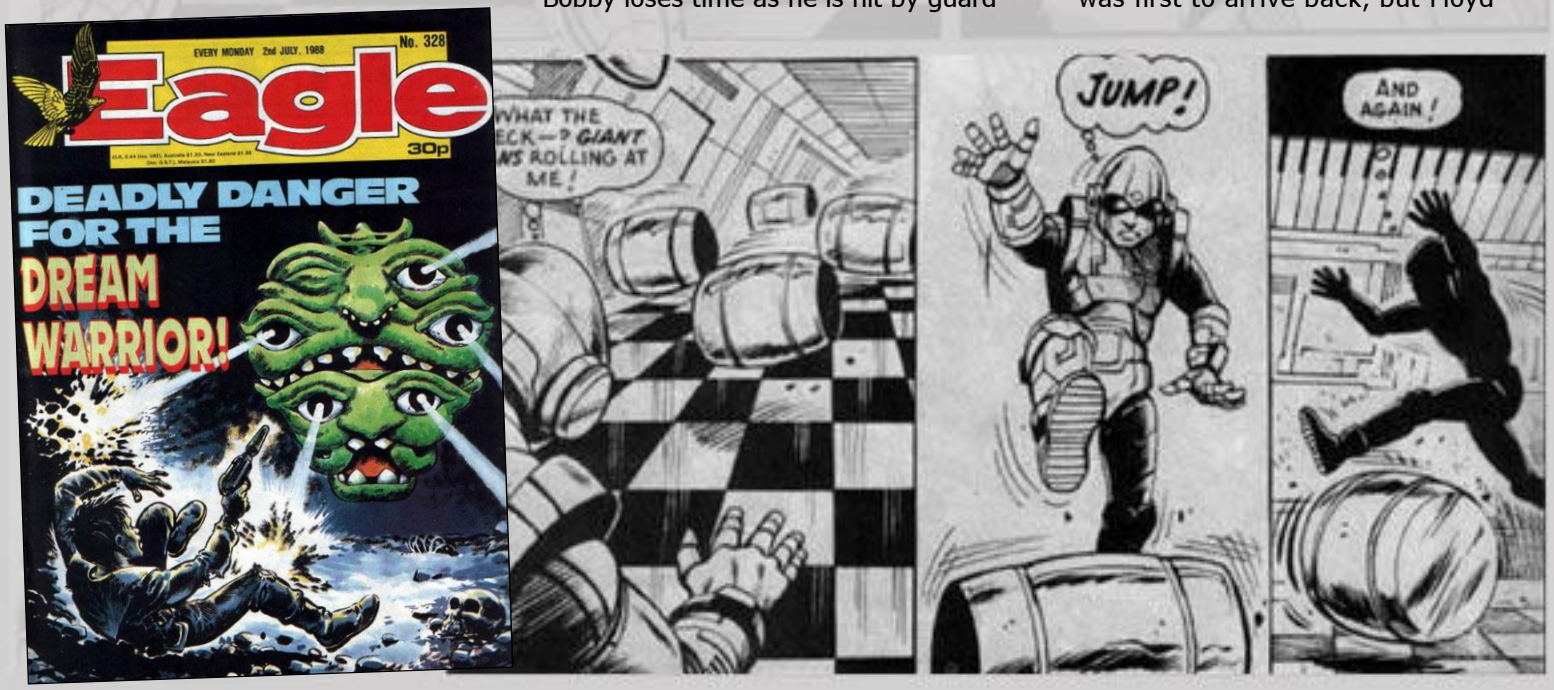
COMPUTER WARRIOR, PART TWO

Believing that Floyd was confined to the Nightmare Zone, Bobby travels to Floyd's home to give his parents the bad news. Upon arriving at the house, however, Bobby is surprised and relieved as Floyd answers the door. They plan a revolt against the Warlord and his tests. They will gather all the Computer Warriors together to tell the authorities. Surely, they would believe them all. The Warlord summons the pair into his lair and accuses them of treachery and, as punishment, they must play the next game with a handicap: no prior knowledge of the game. As the others arrive for the test, the Warlord informs them of the situation. Just as Bev tries to explain the aim of the game, the Warlord moves them to their individual game zones.

The game is *Metro-Cross* and Bobby must reach the finish gate at the end of the tunnel within the time limit, avoiding the obstacles along the way. Not knowing the game, Bobby struggles through the levels, completing the first few levels by the skin of his teeth before failing on level five. He re-appears in the Warlord's keep to find Floyd already there. They were left to stew there as the others had come and gone home without them realising. The Warlord had left them unawares to teach them a lesson.

The surviving twelve competing Computer Warriors were soon given their briefing for the next test. *Impossible Mission* requires the player to penetrate a mad scientists stronghold, avoid detection, and find the nine letters of the security code, which will enable access to his control room and destroy him. Following a good run, Bobby picks up eight of the code letters and decides to have a go at cracking the code. Unfortunately, every password entered is incorrect so Bobby decides to hunt down that final letter. While searching out the last letter, Bobby loses time as he is hit by guard droid laser fire. Despite having all nine letters, he still has to decipher the correct word out of them. Finally, Bobby guesses the word correctly and gains access to the control room to finish off the mad scientist, winning the game. As Bobby, Bev, Floyd, and Gummer return, the Warlord informs them that only ten now remain before sending them back to their homes.

For the next game, *Side Arms*, Bobby is paired up with Bev, while Floyd is with Gummer. Not long into the game, Bev is ambushed and loses a life. The pair quickly progress through the game by using a combination power-up, which fuses the two warriors back to back, forming a 360-degree shooting arc. As the two progress through the game they both end up with one life remaining and when Bev is in trouble, Bobby sacrifices himself so she can survive. When Bobby arrives back in the Warlord's keep, he is told that Floyd was first to arrive back, but Floyd



DARK FORCES RISING

Metro-Cross (1985)
Developer: Namco
Publisher: Namco, U.S. Gold
Platforms: Arcade (also ported to: Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, NES, ZX Spectrum)

Metro-Cross is a futuristic racing game where the player has to run through various levels and reach the end before the time limit runs out. However, many obstacles are strewn along the levels from glass panels (which break under the racer's weight), steam jets, springboards, skateboards, and large cans, all of which slow you down and cost you vital seconds of time. Once the player successfully completes a level, the remaining time is saved over for a bonus level. Although, if the player fails to make it to the end of level before the time limit then it's game over.

Impossible Mission II (1988)
Developer: Novotrade
Publisher: Epyx
Platforms: Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Apple IIgs, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, NES, ZX Spectrum

A direct sequel to Epyx's 1984 game *Impossible Mission*, and follows directly on from that game's plot: the evil Elvin Atombender seeks revenge and the player must stop him. Taking place in Elvin's fortress, the player must negotiate through nine towers that contain all manners of corridors, elevators, and robots. However, the corridors linking the towers are locked and have to be unlocked by completing a numerical puzzle. The elevator, which gains access to the central tower, is also locked, and can be open by finding a password encoded in a piece of music. The player can use bombs and mines to combat the robots, blow up holes in the floor, or to open safes.

blames Gummer for setting him up. As Bev and the rest arrive back, the Warlord sends Floyd to the Nightmare Zone.

Black Christmas is the next test, where the warriors have to deliver presents to children, but avoid the evil goblins lurking around who try to steal the toys. Virtually straight away, Bobby is caught off guard by a goblin as he delivers his first present. Following a good run of deliveries, Bobby is then surrounded by a group of goblins and he doesn't stand a chance—two lives lost. After a tangle with a disguised goblin, Bobby loses his final life and re-appears in the Warlord's keep. He is informed by the Warlord that he is first to return and has the lowest score. When the others arrive, Bev convinces the Warlord to show mercy on Bobby and spare him the Nightmare Zone.

For the next test, *Wizard Warz*, the Warlord explains the player's mission: enter the castle, defeat the three beasts that hold a key, and escape. Bobby successfully defeats the minotaur, taking a might spell with him. Once he takes on King Kong, he uses that spell to defeat the overgrown monkey and take the first key. Bobby then takes a second key from the Fire Demon's lair. After an unsuccessful battle with the Evil Eye, Bobby retreats and battles other monsters in hope of finding a spell that he can use to win against the eye. After defeating Medusa, Bobby gains a reflection spell, which he uses against the eye to win the game.

Bobby's dad has accidentally accessed the computer's real-life code and is playing out *Battlefield 3000* within the computer's realm. Bobby quickly goes in to help him. With his Dad having lost two lives already, Bobby makes it his mission to protect him and win the game, which they do. With no time to take a breather, Bobby practices for the next test: *4th & Inches*.

The eight remaining Computer Warriors are summoned for their next test where Bobby takes on Gummer in a head-to-head match. The game is level pegging right up to the third quarter when Gummer creeps ahead by three points. Bobby claws his way back and manages to pull off a touchdown right at the last gasp, winning the game. As they return to the Warlord's keep, they are told that someone else performed worse than Gunmmer and it is they who have been sent to the Nightmare Zone.

The situation is escalating out of control in the Nightmare Zone and The Warlord decides to take swift action. The next test is brought forward and from the remaining seven competitors, only three will return. The Computer Warriors are all sent their own way to compete in the game *Dream Warriors*. Bobby acquits himself adequately in the game and suffers no major problems. Upon returning from the game, Bobby, Bev, and Gummer are told that they are the warriors to go through to the next test. The other four are to be sent to the Nightmare Zone.

The three remaining warriors, Bobby,

EAGLE
No.280 Every Monday 1st August 1987 28p
COMPUTER WARRIORS—YOU ARE SUMMONED BEFORE THE WARLORD FOR DARING TO PLOT AGAINST ME!
THE CHARGE IS TREASON

INCREDIBLY, THE TWO PLAYERS AND THEIR MOBILSUITS WERE FUSED INTO ONE HYPER-POWERED FIGHTING UNIT—
SPTTZ
BLAT
ACE! NOW WE'VE GOT A FULL 360 DEGREES FIRE-POWER!
ZAP

Side Arms (1986)
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Capcom/Romstar
Platforms: Arcade (also ported to: NEC PC Engine, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum)

Side Arms (or *Side Arms Hyper Dyne*) is an arcade side-scrolling shoot-'em-up developed by Capcom. There is a battle raging against humans and Bozon. Lieutenant Henry and Sergeant Sanders are dispatched to Earth to help defend the planet against the invading forces.

The players can shoot both left and right, and if the correct POW pickup is collected, player one and two can combine into a powerful hybrid weapon. Other weapon upgrades include the Bit (clone shooter), Shotgun, Mega Bazzooka Launcher, Three-Way, and Auto.

Black Christmas (fictional)

Wizard Warz (1987)
Developer: Canvas
Publisher: Go!
Platforms: Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum

An overhead view action adventure as you control a young apprentice wizard with only a few spells and not much power. However, with this limited power, you have to defeat seven master wizards to become the chief wizard. More powerful spells and other interesting goodies can be picked up easily enough throughout the game. Your initial mission is to blast the six monsters that have stolen treasures and return the treasure to its rightful owner.

Battlefield 3000 (fictional)

COMPUTER WARRIOR, PART TWO

Bev, and Gummer, begin their next text. *Blood of Dracula* is played with them working as a group, and as usual, Gummer gets up to his usual tricks by not helping the others or getting them into jeopardy. By the end of the game, Bev is in desperate need of the "water of life" to revive her health, but Gummer has other ideas and takes it for himself. Bev doesn't make it and Gummer and Bobby are the remaining two warriors left.

The game chosen for the ultimate test is *Bionic Commando* and Bobby gets plenty of practice before the Warlord pulls him into the computer's realm. Despite losing a life early on, Bobby progresses through the game well and racks up the points. He eventually loses his last life and re-appears in the Warlord's keep. Gummer appears a few minutes later and it seems that he may have the most points. Gummer may have progressed further in the game, but as the Warlord explains, they achieved exactly the same points: 58,900. It's a draw so Bobby and Gummer must face each other in a sudden death face off. As usual, Gummer plays the cheat card, but Bobby makes good use of his bionic arm to overcome any threat and wins.

The Warlord sends Gummer to the Nightmare Zone, and as he disappears he shouts to Bobby that he will never forgive him. As Bobby dons his new Ultimate Warrior robes—the first to achieve such a status—he states that he will only fight the Dark Forces on one condition: that Bev, Floyd, and all the others are set free from the Nightmare Zone. The Warlord erupts in a fury as he has never been spoken to like this and he orders Bobby to obey. Bobby holds his ground though and the Warlord admires him for it. The Warlord gives Bobby a compromise: win the final battle against the Dark Forces and all those that are imprisoned within the Nightmare Zone will be released.

On his return to reality, Bobby instantly notices that something is wrong. Everything is burnt and blackened in the house. He rushes downstairs to search for his parents only to find their charred remains. In a daze, he staggers outside onto the street to see a vision of despair. The whole town seems to have been destroyed and every building within sight lies in ruins. Death everywhere.

To be continued...

EAGLE
300
ANNIVERSARY
BOBBY PATTERSON
COMPUTER
WARRIOR
YOU ARE THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR! YOU ARE THE FIRST TO HAVE EARNED THE HONOUR TO WEAR THESE ROBES! AND AHEAD OF YOU LIE FURTHER HONOURS!
FOR YOU ALONE HAVE PROVED WORTHY TO GO FORWARD TO BATTLE THE DARK FORCES WHICH EVEN NOW THREATEN TO BREAK INTO THE REAL WORLD!
WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT THEM?

DARK FORCES RISING

4th & Inches (1987)

Developer: Accolade
Publisher: Accolade
Platforms: Amiga, Commodore 64, Apple II, Apple IIGS, DOS

A fine simulation of America's popular sport, the game lets you play with a great number of formations and strategies, which was unheard of at the time. Although the game was well received in the U.S., the game was only converted to platforms that were popular over there: Amiga, C64, Apple, and DOS.

Dream Warrior (1988)

Developer: Tarann
Publisher: U.S. Gold
Platform: Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum

A side-scrolling, futuristic shoot-'em-up. In the future, the world is controlled by corporations and wars are fought in a dream world. Here the corporations control dream demons to defeat their foes. However, resistance fighters are fighting back and the player controls one of these resistance fighters hoping to rescue their friends from the control of Ocular, the mightiest of all dream demons.

Blood of Dracula (fictional)

Bionic Commando (1987)

Developer: Capcom, Software Creations
Publisher: Capcom, Go!
Platforms: Arcade, Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum

An action platform game where the player controls the main character who has a bionic arm. This bionic arm can be used as a grappling toll, which can be used to swing across gaps. The plot involves the player infiltrating the enemy base and destroying the plans to launch missiles.

KILLER APP

Killer new characters. Killer new moves. Killer new game. That was the original poster slogan, but the N64 game received mixed reactions. Ack tells us how the game really plays

DETAILS

Developer:	Rare
Publisher:	Nintendo
Released:	1996
Platform:	Nintendo 64
Genre:	Fighter

Throughout the life of the Nintendo 64, there were few fighting games, and even fewer that mattered. This is the tale of one of those, forgotten in the sands of time that truly deserved more credit than it received. *Killer Instinct Gold* was the only console offshoot for Rare's fighting game FMV extravaganza, *Killer Instinct 2*. Licensed by Nintendo and manufactured by Midway, it was the sequel to 1994's *Killer Instinct* and kept the original's six-button control scheme.

In November 1996, *Killer Instinct Gold* was released upon North America, followed by a launch for the PAL regions several months later. While the majority of reviews didn't say it was perfect, they generally slated it as an above-average title that looked even better when put up against the precious few other fighters for the console, namely the 64's port of *Mortal Kombat Trilogy*. And *Killer Instinct Gold* did have a lot going for it. Of course, due to limitations of Nintendo's cartridge format, not everything made the cut.

First, if you're going into this expecting *Killer Instinct 2* in every possible way, you're going to be a little disappointed. Gone are the multiple endings, the FMVs and certain plot points, and some frames of animation were cut. Stages, formerly FMVs, had to be redone entirely to fit the Nintendo 64, and static screens replaced the victory sequences. Blood was also cut out from the game.

But with the space saved, Rare decided it would play to the strengths of the console. Stages were entirely redone in 3D graphics, allowing characters to look as if they were actually fighting in those locales, as opposed to the arcade predecessor, where characters didn't quite fit in. A camera was implemented that would zoom in and out based on how close the players were, so the action was always easy to see. Stage layouts were changed a little, though they kept their interactivity. Trash cans could be knocked over, certain walls smashed through, and bits and pieces of these objects would fly around and remain in the level for the remainder of the fight. It was also still possible to kill opponents by knocking them off ledges, though admittedly the replacement for the FMVs wasn't as fulfilling. Characters remain two-dimensional, and though there are some issues with blurry textures, it's still fairly impressive for what is effectively a first generation title on the console.

There were other minor touches. The game's combo counter registered more hits than the arcade title. Endings were changed. While the game featured battery-powered saving on the cartridge, it was also fully compatible with the Nintendo 64's Controller Pak. Also, the ability to pause at any time in a battle, including after an opponent had been defeated, could come in handy from time to time.

The audio quality of the port was also top notch. Ever hit could be heard, every painful grown or heavy metallic thud of Fulgore's metal foot whenever he jumped. Limited voice acting was included for certain characters, perhaps one of the best occurring in training mode where the instruction claps his hands and says "Pass" whenever the player correctly performs an action. However it should also be noted that certain sound effects were reused for multiple characters, which does detract from this. As for music, it was superb, fitting themes to specific characters that differed greatly in

The character selection screen where you find all sorts of interesting info

That Sabrewulf is one scray dude. Even Spinal has jumped out of his skin with fright

Kim and Orchid take part in the girl-on-girl action

Sabrewulf versus Sabrewulf. Who will win? Probably Sabrewulf

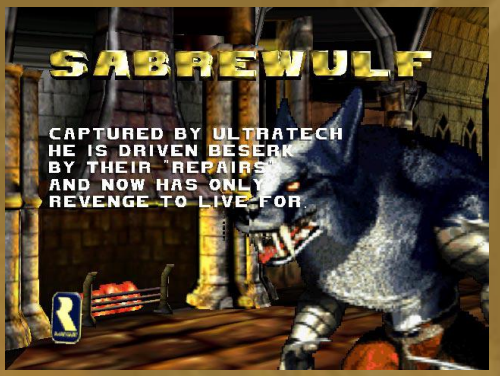
A skeleton named Spinal? Well, that's nice. Aaargh, he's got a sword and he's certainly not spineless

Rare threw in several Training options, so players could practice special moves, autodoubles, combos, and more

Sabrewulf's new tactics of wearing short shorts to make opponents kill themselves laughing seems to work

and he flies in with a triple whammy of moves

You can change the colour of the costumes, which is... fun



Each character intro screen gives some background details on them: who they are, their history...

styles, from the jungle beats of Maya's stage, complete with monkey chirps, to the electronic dance music of Orchid's. Certain tracks, including Orchid's, even featured lyrics. The audio capabilities of the game were often congratulated, especially the surround sound effects that would appear in the title.

To sweeten the deal, Rare threw in several Training options, so players could practice special moves, autodoubles, combos, and more. Other game modes included Team Battle, Team Elimination Battle (which required the player kill the opponent), classic Arcade mode, Tournament mode, and an Options menu. Each time the player beat the Arcade mode on a higher difficulty level than previously done, a new section of the Options menu would unlock, up to level 5 for the highest difficulty setting. These new options would change everything from the amount of damage throws could do to turning off the ability to block. Other unlockables included different color schemes for characters added to the list of already present variants, depending on the difficulty of Training modes completed.

And then there was the combat system. In *Killer Instinct Gold*, combos flowed from move to move off of autodoubles, which are designated by the type of attack the player executes to start the combo. From there, various strings of attacks can be used. The author once found a claim of over two million unique combinations among the 13 characters, which, while seeming excessive, does give an idea about the capability of the system. And while combos aren't necessarily difficult to begin and tack on a few hits, players will find themselves striving hard to obtain higher and higher numbers, eventually executing combos with dozens of hits. Unfortunately this system also enables button mashing, which is a bit of a drawback. Of course, to counter this there is a system of combo breakers, which boil down to performing special moves at specific points in an enemy's combo.

As for the rest of the title, the plot is kept from the arcade title, so certain characters present in the first *Killer Instinct* are notably absent (including the author's favourite convict-turned-living-fireball), and Gargos still serves as the final boss. While the game is only two player, it should keep dedicated players interested in battling their friends even after everything else has been unlocked.

All in all, *Killer Instinct Gold* is an enjoyable fighter, and easily one of the best for the Nintendo 64. While it didn't reinvent the wheel and won't necessarily hold up against the latest *King of Fighters* or *Street Fighter*, it does give the player a good chance to learn the system, play through the arcade mode, and have some good times with friends. And considering how a third entry in the series has been in the rumour mill for more than a decade and seems a distant afterthought at this point, it's a good chance to go back and remember the glory days of this little gem.

All in all, *Killer Instinct Gold* is an enjoyable fighter, and easily one of the best for the Nintendo 64

Sabrewulf gives out three hits in a row. Ouch!

One of the many arenas in which you can do battle in

How to cause a COMPLETE CONTROVERSY

NIGHT TRAP™

An interactive FMV game full of B-movie style cheesy acting and special effects. Not exactly the ingredients of one of the most controversial games of all time, but as Neil Reive explains, *Night Trap* was getting criticised for violence and sexism left, right, and centre

DETAILS

Developer:	Digital Pictures, Inc
Publisher:	Sega
Released:	1992
Platform:	Mega CD, 3DO, 32X CD, DOS, Mac
Genre:	Adventure, Strategy

HOW TO CAUSE A COMPLETE CONTROVERSY

Sega's Mega CD was meant to be all about bringing gamers CD-based technology: full-motion video, spoken soundtracks, custom scaling, sprite rotation, and arcade quality conversions. It was hyped as the biggest and best console to hit town for years. Supposedly a major step forward in games playing, the machine was set to revolutionise the home entertainment business. However, things didn't exactly plan out the way Sega had hoped. Hotly anticipated games were delayed, the games available at the time were mediocre to average at best, and the launch of the Mega CD in Europe was put on hold by Sega Europe themselves. Things weren't looking too good for the fledging Sega add-on.

In early 1993, a host of exciting titles were released at, funnily enough, the same time as Sega Europe launched the Mega CD in Europe. Titles such as *Cobra Command*, *Road Blaster FX*, *Sewer Shark*, *Night Trap*, *The Terminator CD*, and *Final Fight CD* were all due to be released within months of each other. Things were starting to look a bit better for Sega's unfulfilled Mega Drive add-on. Out of these games, one of the brightest hopes was an innovative FMV interactive game from developers Digital Pictures called *Night Trap*, which used real actors to film the game's many scenes. With the FMV and dialogue soundtrack, the game came on two full Mega CD discs, which was unheard of in the early 1990s.

Night Trap's plot involves aliens called augers who invade an American country house, where a gang of high-spirited teenagers are holding a party. However, as the evening progresses, the kids start disappearing one by one. S.C.A.T. (Sega Covert Action Team) are called into deal with the situation. Traps, cameras, and security systems, which were installed to capture the kids, have been hacked by S.C.A.T. and you have been given direct control of them. It's your job to keep an eye on the partying kids and watch out for the augers. The augers are easily recognisable as men in black and once you spot them you should activate a trap to get rid of them. To complicate matters, the augers occasionally change the security access codes so that your controls don't work. By keeping one step ahead of the augers, you should trap them all, saving the kids in the process.

In spite of the graininess and narrow viewpoint, the full-motion video was impressive for the time, and it was cleverly constructed in real-time. For example, when someone left the room and you follow them, you would catch their conversation, but if you didn't follow them straight away, then you could miss vital information. Unfortunately, this new realism ruffled the feathers of the moral crusaders who were concerned that because there were real people featured in the game with scenes of death and violence (albeit in traditional B-movie style), the game was effectively a video nasty. Through your Mega CD, people thought you were being turned into a dangerous, evil, sadistic, and amoral gore hound who could rip apart the very fabric of civilised society...

The opening sequence is just like a B-movie classic, setting the tone for what is to come... (DOS)

Real actors and actresses in a realistic interactive game. We can't have that. (32X CD)

This game must be evil. Look, the baddies are dressed in black. (DOS)

Controversial scene alert. You must be at least 15 years old to views these shots. (Mega CD)

One of the brightest hopes was an innovative FMV interactive game from Digital Pictures called *Night Trap*, which used real actors to film the game's many scenes

It soon became clear that these people actually hadn't played the game at all and had no idea what they were talking about

The Daily Mail got particularly concerned and it plastered "SEGA SICKENER" in one of it's headlines, with the words "gruesome", "murder", and "torture" setting the tone in the next few lines. The paper claimed that the game was "more like a video nasty than a game" and then quoted political statements from certain members of parliament. "The manufacturers are evil and ought to be punished for promoting the game," stated Terry Dicks MP. Dame Jill Knight MP, also keen to get her name in the papers, said: "this is a new generation of videos, nastier than ever before. We should consider legislation against such game because they encourage people to maim, mutilate and murder." Indeed.

It soon became clear that these people actually hadn't played the game at all and had no idea what they were talking about. Nevertheless, Toys R Us refused to stock the game and the media (following the, then recent, "Nintendo killed my son" debacle over an epilepsy death) got another chance to knock video games—another chance to find an "evil" scapegoat for the wrong doing of young people. The box art of the game's packaging was also criticized for what many believed to be a sexist depiction of women. And what did Sega think of all this fuss? Nick Alexander, boss of Sega Europe, said that while he was concerned about the situation, he thought that the fuss over *Night Trap* was "just extraordinary" and considered the game's content no worse than an average *Doctor Who* episode.

In November 1993, Daniel E Lungren, Attorney General of California sent a letter to Sega, Nintendo, and Capcom, requesting that they tone down or remove the violence in games such as "*Mortal Kombat* and *Night Trap*". In the letter he mentions he was concerned with the rising trend of juvenile crime, which he believed was helped by youngsters playing violent video games. Sega replied stating that they commended Attorney General Lungren's concerns and that they also shared these concerns. To this end, Sega introduced the video game Rating Council: an independent council of educators and child psychologists to rate video games according to age appropriateness: 'GA' (general audience), 'MA-13' (mature adults with parental discretion), and 'MA-17' (adults only). Sega also stated that it was the parents' right and responsibility to choose what is best for their children, as the rating would be clearly marked on the game's packaging. So that was that, right? Well, no. The whole issue escalated and ended up being discussed in the Senate.

On 9th December 1993, Senator Joe Lieberman started the proceedings at the congressional hearings. After detailing the violence of *Mortal Kombat*, Senator Lieberman then went on to describe *Night Trap*: "...the object here is to keep hooded men from hanging scantily-clad women or drilling their necks with a tool that is

Guns as well? Ban it! String the makers up, burn the corpses, and send the widows a ham. (DOS)

Cheesy, B-movie style special effects? No. Comical prat falls? No. Ban it? Yep. (DOS)

It's got real girls in a real bedroom, it must contain X-rated content... (Mega CD)

A selection of people behind the *Night Trap* witch-hunt, all with their own agenda..

One of the attendees of the senate hearings shuffling over to their seat. (DOS)

My feelings exactly. He must have heard about the senate hearings. (DOS)

The Augers disappear in a puff of smoke. It's really quite comical and hardly frightening. (Mega CD)

The original cover art (top) was deemed sexist, so future art bore dreary shots of vampires with Dana Plato in the foreground.

designed to literally drain their blood. *Night Trap* features real actors and actresses and achieved a startling and awful level of realism…" He went on to say that games like these are "outrageous, and contribute to the unacceptable level of violence in our society."

Senator Lieberman then declared that he was "introducing legislation—co-sponsored by Senator Herb Khol of Wisconsin—to ensure that parents have the information they need when they go out to buy a game for their kids. The system could involve ratings—such as those used to rate movies—or could simply be informative labels." In closing, Senator Lieberman stated that "we now require warning labels on toys that could potentially damage children's bodies, why not do so on a toy that can damage their minds? In finishing, parents, remember some of these video games do not promote peace on earth and good will to all men."

On 16th December 1993, *Night Trap* was pulled from shop shelves. Naturally, due to all the controversy and removal of the game from the majority of stores, the game was not commercially successful. Also, Sega of America stopped any further shipments of the game, presumably in an effort to reduce the politicians' and public's backlash regarding the congressional hearings. The original *Night Trap* two-disc edition quickly became a collector's item and has been known to sell to the value of £100 or more.

The Interactive Digital Software Association formed the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), which successfully negated the need for any government regulation. ESRB was a self-regulated management, which provided appropriate games with suitable rankings: 'E' (suitable for everyone), 'T' (appropriate for teens of age 13 and over), 'EC' (early childhood), 'M' (mature adults of 17 years old and over), and 'AO' (18 years and over only). The system worked in a similar way to the movie industry in that Games companies would voluntarily submit their product for rating.

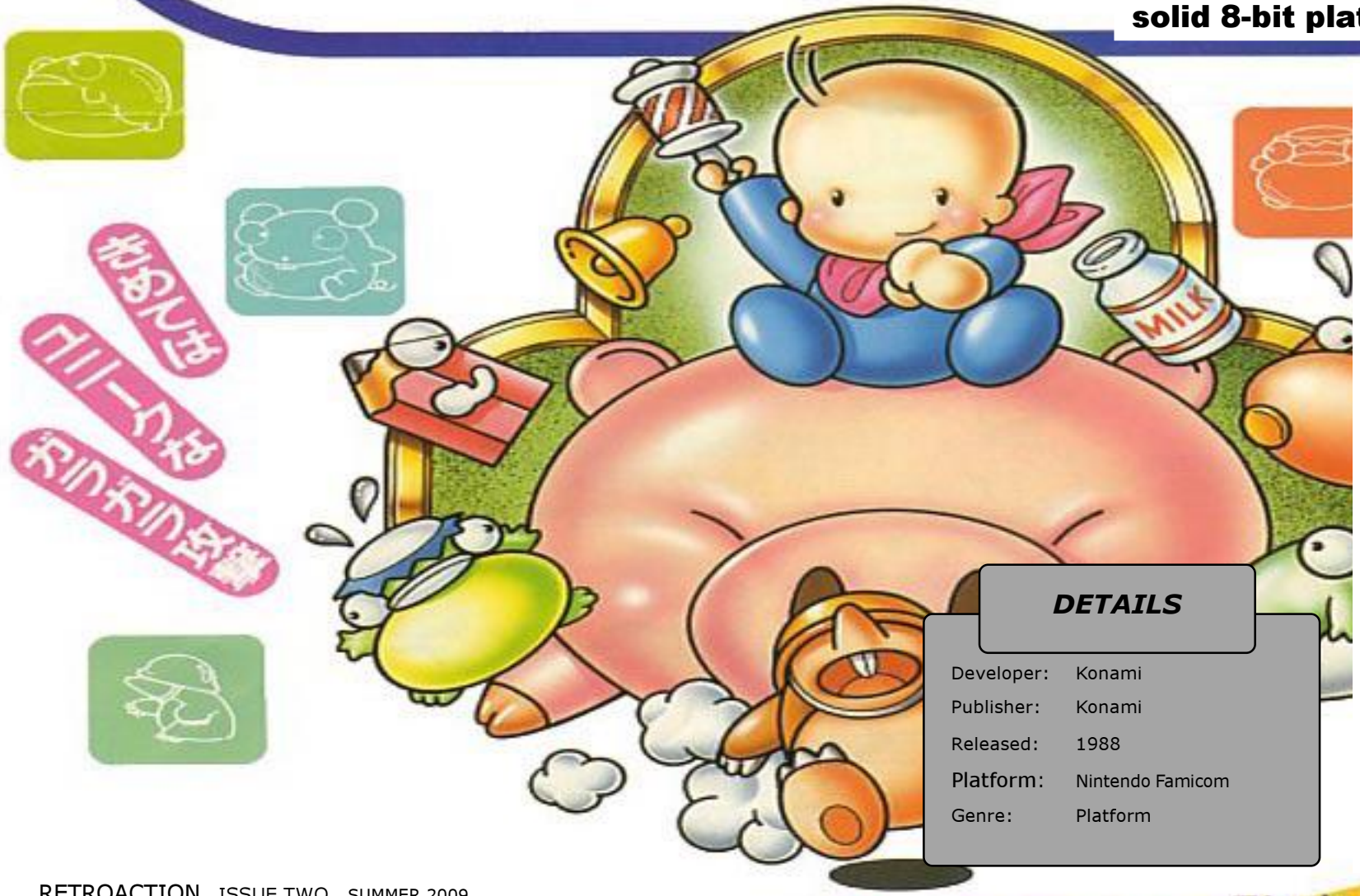
Once the controversy had faded somewhat, and with an industrywide rating system now in place, the game was re-released on Mega CD with a 'M'ature rating. It was then ported to 3DO and Sega's 32X, followed by PC and Macintosh versions in 1995. What was evident this time, though, was that these versions, besides being rated, featured a new cover on the game's packaging: a harmless screenshot of Dana Plato (the main character from the game), with some 'pleasing to the eye' artwork in the background.

What a lot of fuss over a video game, but what was this really all about? Compared to *Mortal Kombat*'s decapitations, tearing out spinal columns, lethal finishing moves, and, of course, plenty of blood, *Night Trap* is pretty tame. Yes, there is the realism of the footage, but that was done with tongues so firmly in cheeks that it couldn't possibly be taken seriously, right? And despite claims from the hearings that the player's role was to "trap and kill women," it is, in fact, the opposite: they are saving them from harm. *Night Trap* was merely used as a tool for politicians who had agendas, to use, alongside *Mortal Kombat*, in their fight against increasing violence in video games. Echoing Nick Alexander's words, *Night Trap* really was no worse than a PG (Parental Guidance) rated *Doctor Who* episode.

"We now require warning labels on toys that could potentially damage children's bodies, why not do so on a toy that can damage their minds?" - Senator Lieberman

バイオミラクル ぼくって

... or Bio Miracle Bokutte Upa (in English) contains babies and cute graphics. This doesn't sound like a good combination for a game. However, as Mohammed Soussi explains, the game should not be dismissed for its immature premise, and deserves a spot light for being a solid 8-bit platformer



Who would ever thought of playing a baby character in a platform game? Well, I never did. My only experience with babies on a game was on the Game & Watch. Konami decided to create a baby hero complete with a magical rattle stick to strike and inflate all those horrible enemies. This game is fun with cute-catchy music (did I just say that?).

Bio Miracle Bokutte Upa (My Name is Upa) was developed and released by Konami in 1988 for the Famicom Disk System in Japan and later released on cartridge format onto the Famicom in 1993. The game was planned for a U.S. release in 1989, but the former chairman of Nintendo (Howard Lincoln) decided the game was not suitable for the U.S. market.

During the early 1990s, *Bio Miracle* filtered its way into the U.S. as a pirate copies and could be hired or even purchased under the name of *Baby Mario*, becoming a popular rental as many kids thought it was a Mario game. This news was spread by word of mouth in the schoolyards, thus creating hype and demand for the game, eventually giving it cult status by platform fans. Because of the rarity of the cartridge, many rental copies went missing (I wonder

DETAILS

Developer:	Konami
Publisher:	Konami
Released:	1988
Platform:	Nintendo Famicom
Genre:	Platform

why?). However, *Bio Miracle* was eventually released in the U.S. on the Wii Virtual Console on 8th June 2008, rekindling its affair with former fans that never owned the original game.

The game's plot goes something like this: Upa the baby prince of a magical kingdom and one of the kingdoms bravest fighters accidentally breaks an urn containing an evil spirit (Zai), an evil goatish demon who takes the life force of the kingdoms adults and kidnaps all the babies. Upa avoids capture by the help of a magical fairy who was trapped in the urn along with Zai, the fairy gives Upa a rattle with magical abilities to help his quest in saving the kingdom and help defeat the evil Zai.

Upa's abilities consist of the crawl, jumps, and strike. Upa can be dazed if you attempt to jump or fall from a high platform, however, you will not loose any energy, but Upa will be incapacitated momentarily when he lands. Upa faces a number of enemies during his adventure, which are in the form of cute animals: penguins, pigs, bats to name but a few. Similar to most platform games, the enemies tend to follow a route or pattern unless their path is obstructed. Upa will encounter

enemies on land, water, and the air during various stages. While Upa can use his magical rattle to defeat the enemies, this is just a simple strike, which will cause the enemy to inflate. You can take advantage of the rendered enemy in two ways, either to use as a lift whilst the enemy elevates towards hard to reach platforms or as a secondary weapon by striking the enemy a second time. Whilst it's inflated, it will then launch into the direction you strike it eliminating more enemies; this technique is also needed to defeat the end of level Boss. The inflated enemies can be useful especially when collecting the hard to reach power ups.

There are a total of four power ups to collect: milk comes in a variety of different bottles but each one will replenish Upa's health, a bell will enable Upa to be invincible and run instead of crawl for a short period of time, a heart will increase Upa's life bar and also replenish it, an hourglass will freeze all the enemies on screen

for a short period of time. The icon for the power up is a small container with a picture of Up's face and are situated on different parts of the level. Upa begins with three life hearts, which can be increased to five. If an enemy touches Upa then his health will decrease by half a heart. The controls are very fluid and simple, but very responsive, which is needed for this type of platform game.

There are two difficulty settings that can be chosen from in the game: easy and normal. You can pretty much fly through the levels in easy mode if you are a veteran platformer, but I recommend setting the game on 'Normal' mode. There are a total of seven worlds, with each world containing three levels, so go do the Math.

The first thing that you will notice about the game is the bright vibrant colour of the levels. There is great detail on the sprites, stages, and backgrounds, particularly the detail in World 4-2 of the circuit boards and microchips. The game's graphics are similar to *Doki Doki Panic* (*Super Mario Bros 2*) and the *Rockman* series (*Megaman*). The music is produced very well and really suits the premise of the game: very cartoony and catchy. Each World has its own theme including the end of level Boss. The sound effects add to the cartoony atmosphere from the sound of Upa's rattle to the sound of the enemies when they take a hit.

Bio Miracle looks like just another crazy obscure Japanese game that loses its appeal after a few plays, doesn't it? Far from it. Konami produced another great title encompassing gaming elements borrowed from *Dig Dug.* Once you start to play you will find the game fairly straight forward, but it's one of those titles that you find yourself periodically returning to play. It's baffling to this day why Howard Lincoln refused to have this game released in the West, because it had potential to become a top seller, especially during the peak of the platform genre in the late 80s. Well that's Bureaucracy for you. Konami always had the ability to produce great titles for the Famicom/ NES and this is one of those titles. If you're a fan of the 8-bit platformer, then you will not be disappointed.

It's baffling to this day why Howard Lincoln refused to have this game released in the West, because it had potential to become a top seller

THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL WORLD OF RETROGAMING

TRAFFIC

Amongst the many games on the 8-bit Amstrad CPC, Traffic must rank as one of the weirdest, yet wonderful, offerings available. Richard Goulstone explains why

It's 1985, and you have to come up with a great new wizz bang game for Amsoft for the new Amstrad CPC computer. Something with excitement, good graphics, superb sound and gripping gameplay. What would you come up with? A game that lets you control traffic lights, of course.

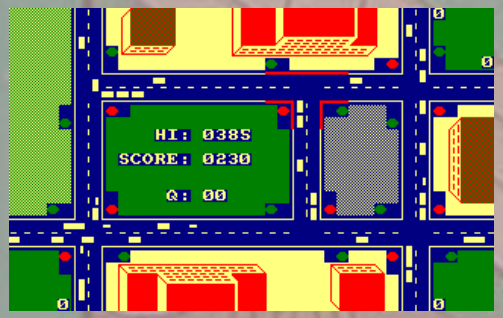
Aptly named *Traffic*, the concept of the game isn't as boring as it sounds. Especially if you come from New Zealand—a country that didn't get it's first traffic lights until 1979, has only had weekend shopping since 1994, and where 'Sheep Husbandry' is a compulsory school subject.

The game itself is quite simple to play. You are presented with a static screen showing an overhead view of several city blocks with many intersections. Traffic enters the screen at various places, with the intention of travelling along the roads and through said intersections to exit at the opposite side of the screen. The graphics do leave a lot to the imagination. For example the different vehicles are represented by varying sizes of small rectangular boxes, from motorcycles up to buses and trucks (or 'lorries' as Brits might call them).

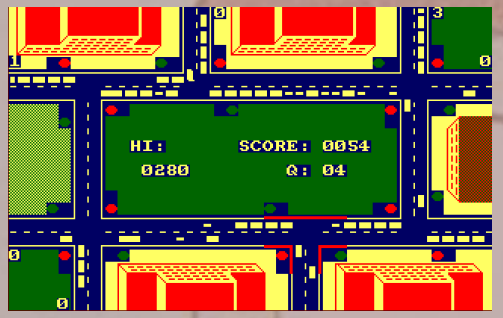
Using the joystick or keypad you have to move from intersection to intersection and change the lights from red to green, or green to red. There are no orange lights in this game (in New Zealand, green means go, orange means go faster). Your aim is to keep the traffic flowing smoothly, with no build-ups. If a queue of traffic at any intersection gets too long, much sounding of horns will be heard and it is game over. Incidentally, this is the main sound in the game, beeping horns, with the occasional engine noise thrown in.

Gradually, the traffic gets faster and faster and more numerous, and the gameplay does become quite frantic. I imagine girls could be good at this game as it requires some multi-tasking—you have to try and keep your eyes and mind on all the intersections at once to make sure there isn't a sneaky back-log building up on at one of them. Once you have survived a certain amount of time with the successful flow of traffic, you move on to the next level: a new screen with a new intersection layout.

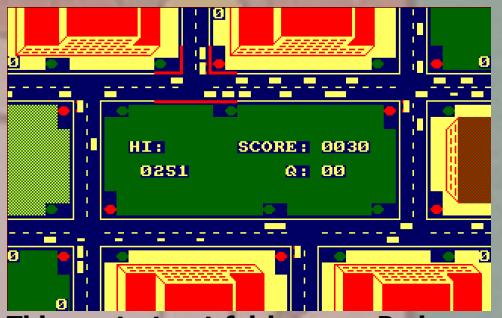
You have to admit, this game is unique, and who would have thought controlling traffic lights could be so much fun? (OK, maybe Chris from Eggheads would). An original of the tape is quite rare and expensive on eBay, so I am assuming that this wasn't a big seller back in 1985 when it first came out. For me, this is one of those iconic Amsoft/ Amstrad games that I enjoy loading into my Amstrad CPC464 and whiling away the time with. So, give *Traffic* a go, put on your extra thick spectacles, slot in your pocket protector, slick back your hair and take a ride to 1985....



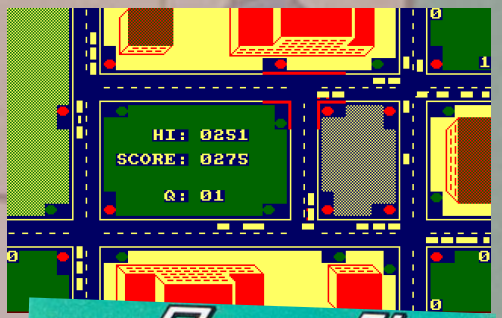
And when you complete the first level, a whole new level at a different part of the town appears

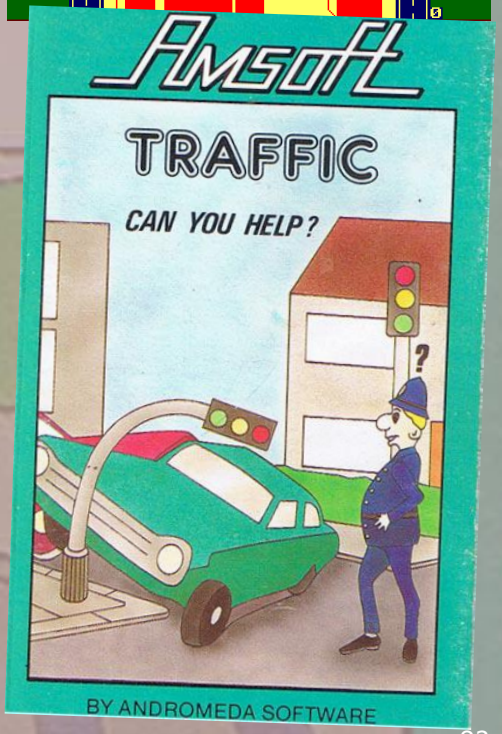


Arrgh! Traffic jam. I'm outta here...



Things start out fairly easy. Red light here, green there, red, green, but the traffic soon picks up





Using the joystick or keypad you have to move from intersection to intersection and change the lights from red to green, or green to red.

Game Over